

'Better Angels': Tea Partisanship in the New Hampshire State Legislature

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'Better Angels': Tea Partisanship in the New Hampshire State Legislature

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Introduction

The Tea Party is not so much about policy as it is about feelings. From the Party's first breath, Rick Santelli's famous rant decrying mortgage assistance for "losers,"¹ its attraction has been a shared sense of social anxiety, reaction to rapidly changing norms, and fear that an idealized past America will no longer be there for children and grandchildren. Critics call into question its status as an authentic social movement, but its effect on energizing an electorate toward a Republican landslide in the 2010 midterm elections is undeniable. While recent scholarship focuses on documenting the demographic composition of the Tea Party and noting the Republican Party's rightward shift, there is scant attention to what Tea Party people believe and how that interacts with their obvious anger. Philosophy professor J.M. Bernstein states this problem in his piece, "The Very Angry Tea Party,":

"It would be comforting if a clear political diagnosis of the Tea Party movement were available — if we knew precisely what political events had inspired the fierce anger that pervades its meetings and rallies, what policy proposals its backers advocate, and, most obviously, what political ideals and values are orienting its members."²

This paper explores how anger informs Tea Party politics, using public opinion polls to locate Tea Partiers politically and to draw a distinction between attitudes and ideologies. I argue that Tea Partiers are neither the Independents the right casts them as, nor are they hard-nosed conservatives as scholarship portrays them – it is more complex than that. Those who identify with the Tea Party take conservative stances on favorability questions and abstract political goals such as smaller government or lower taxes, a result of the unique sense of frustration at the country's direction. By contrast, they do agree with most Americans when

¹ Kate Zernike, *Boiling Mad: Inside Tea Party America* (New York: Times Books, 2010) 13. She writes, "The legend goes that it all started on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange on Thursday, February 19, 2009" but she explains how the first Tea Party event actually took place three days earlier under the guidance of Seattle resident Keli Carender. For the Carender story and early Tea Party meetings, see pp 13-19.

² J.M. Bernstein, "The Very Angry Tea Party," *The New York Times* June 13, 2010.
<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/06/13/the-very-angry-tea-party/>

posed with specific policy options: support for same-sex civil unions, respect for Social Security and Medicare, desire for stable immigration flows.³ There are real differences between Tea Party people as well, with libertarians and social conservatives both competing for influence under an umbrella coalition.

This analysis of Tea Party beliefs is the groundwork for the paper's second level of study, an ideological comparison between the broad group of Tea Party supporters and a narrow set of New Hampshire state legislators. Interviews with the legislators revealed a varied extent of Tea Party affiliation, with some receiving endorsements from Tea Party groups, others expressing support without participation, and one eschewing the label. The differences between socially conservative legislators, with fears over the country's direction, and libertarian legislators, who have ideological opposition to a number of longstanding government institutions, parallel to some extent the same gulf of Tea Party voters.

Overall, the legislators are more libertarian and more extreme in their policy positions than those opinion poll respondents who loosely associate with the Tea Party. This mirrors traditional political science research: political elites are more partisan and extreme in their views than the majority of Americans who do not actively participate in politics.⁴ While Tea Partiers want smaller government in the abstract, they reject cuts to Social Security, for example. Legislators are much more willing to make dramatic cuts to these programs – one representative, for example, went so far as to advocate a regressive flat tax (not a flat percentage rate, but a fixed annual payment *for all taxpayers*). Others support

³ Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1967). Americans are famously ideologically conservative and operationally liberal. This paper argues that Tea Partiers are as well, but slightly less operationally liberal and much, much more ideologically conservative.

⁴ Morris Fiorina et. al. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (3rd Edition Pearson, 2011)

decriminalizing drugs, positions that would very well alienate a plurality of Tea Partiers, who are moderates on these specific policy proposals. This clarifies one of Bernstein's major dilemmas:

"When it comes to the Tea Party's concrete policy proposals, things get fuzzier and more contradictory: keep the government out of health care, but leave Medicare alone; balance the budget, but don't raise taxes; let individuals take care of themselves, but leave Social Security alone."⁵

In seeking to understand these complexities and contradictions, the paper probes into the mores of Tea Party people and New Hampshire legislators, what Tocqueville calls their "habits of the heart." In the spirit of his great undertaking, the project extends the scope of study "to the different notions that men possess, to the various opinions that are current in their midst, and to the sum of ideas of which the habits of the mind are formed."⁶

The Tea Party's Chronology and Composition

Numerous sources list Rick Santelli's February 19, 2009 CNBC speech calling for a Chicago Tea Party as the first articulation of a common sense of frustration that millions of Americans experienced.⁷ Would-be activists ran with the Tea Party imagery, forming their own small groups over the next few months, culminating in an April 15, 2009, rally in Washington, DC that featured hundreds of thousands of participants. The movement grew throughout that summer in the hundreds of town hall meetings on President Obama's proposed health care reforms, with media focus on some of the extreme rhetoric likening the

⁵ Bernstein, "The Very Angry Tea Party."

⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) Vol. 1, Part II, Chapter 9, 273. Tocqueville explains that in forming durable political institutions, geography and the laws play important roles, but not as foundational as the mores of Americans, which give the laws their spirit and force.

⁷ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 13. See also Elizabeth Price Foley, *The Tea Party: Three Principles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 14-15 and Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 7-8, 45.

president to Hitler, for example⁸. Tea Partiers organized in primary elections and backed eventual Republican nominees for office, ushering in one of the largest national Republican victories in history in 2010.

Despite their presentation as a monolith, there is no single Tea Party – no centralized hierarchy, no card-carrying members. According to Skocpol and Williamson, it has three layers. First, there is genuine grassroots activism of hundreds of local groups, as well as a larger portion of Americans who identify to some extent with the Tea Party without showing up to rallies. Second are the “roving billionaires” like the Koch brothers, conservative interests groups, and self-appointed spokespeople.⁹ The third Tea Party tier is the media, especially Fox News. Skocpol and Williamson stress that, contrary to a conventional wisdom that the Tea Party is an artificial, Astroturf movement,¹⁰ it comprises thousands of well-meaning Americans with sincere concerns about the role and size of government.

That is not to deny the role that national advocacy organizations play by funding ancillary groups and setting the national agenda. Chief among these is FreedomWorks, a laissez-faire economic interest group led by Dick Armey, the former Republican Speaker of the House. FreedomWorks created the Tea Party Patriots, “an umbrella group that endeavors to orchestrate local and regional grassroots Tea Partiers into a bigger-than-life force in the media and electoral contests.”¹¹ Other umbrella organizations exist, among them the Tea

⁸ Meena Hartenstein, “Tea party billboard comparing Barack Obama to Hitler, Lenin, covered up: group calls it bad decision,” *Daily News*, July 14, 2010. http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-07-14/news/27069949_1_tea-party-controversial-billboard-bad-decision. In reaction to criticism, the Iowa Tea Party group in question covered up the advertisement likening the President to Hitler and Lenin.

⁹ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 13.

¹⁰ Ryan Powers, “Pelosi: Tea Parties are part of an ‘astroturf’ campaign by ‘some of the wealthiest people in America,’” *ThinkProgress*, April 15, 2009. <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2009/04/15/37578/pelosi-astroturf/?mobile=nc>.

¹¹ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 9-10.

Party Express, and these groups form coalitions with a whole array of conservative interest-specific groups. Tea Party nomenclature can be tricky – some groups take their name from important dates. 4/15 represents the Income Tax deadline that marked the first major Tea Party protest.¹² Glenn Beck’s Tea Party brand is the 9/12 Project, symbolism referring to the day after September 11, 2001, that includes “nine principles” and “twelve values” for America.¹³

There are also self-appointed spokespeople, among them Glenn Beck, former Fox News host, and Sarah Palin, the 2008 vice-presidential nominee. Rep Michele Bachmann, who heads the House Tea Party caucus and was an also-ran in the 2012 Republican presidential primary, is another important figure.¹⁴ Media outlets such as Fox News also play an important role as a mouthpiece for many of this celebrity Tea Partiers as well as frequently covering Tea Party rallies.¹⁵

While Skocpol and Williamson do an excellent job investigating the Tea Party tiers of media, wealthy donors, and the grassroots citizenry, they devote only one chapter to locating politically the grassroots component of the Tea Party.¹⁶ Their focus is narrowly on the most active wing of the Tea Party, those who frequent meetings or attend rallies, while this paper looks more broadly at opinion polls and adds legislators to the equation. While they are quick to dismiss the Tea Party die-hards as radically conservative, this paper finds that the broader segment of Tea Party sympathizers are not as conservative, at least not on policy questions. Widening the scope to include loose sympathizers is important in an examination of

¹² Glenn Harlan Reynolds, “Tax day becomes protest day,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 2009. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123975867505519363.html>

¹³ The 9/12 Project, “Our Principles & Values,” <http://the912-project.com/about/the-9-principles-12-values/>

¹⁴ Michele Bachmann, “Biography,” <http://bachmann.house.gov/Biography/>.

¹⁵ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 121-154.

¹⁶ Ibid. 45-82.

legislators' ideologies, for small bands of voters in tri-corner hats do not determine elections on their own. This broadening also makes analysis more representative of a larger segment of the population, as direct political activism comes to represent a smaller and smaller portion of Americans.¹⁷

There is also disagreement about whether the Tea Party meets the traditional definition of a social movement. Boston College political science professor Kay Schlozman hesitated in calling the Tea Party a genuine social movement¹⁸, but likened it to other middle class citizen struggles such as the temperance movement and anti-abortion activism.¹⁹ In both cases, the activism around a single issue was really about more than just temperance or just abortion – it represented challenges to entire moral views and social relationships. Harvard researcher of social movements Tim McCarthy agreed in part, calling it “a social movement of many Tea Parties,” the “tip of the iceberg,” and a “big tent.” He offered another theory, that the Tea Party’s quick co-option into the Republican Party machinery prevents it from attaining true social movement status. Social movements are usually critical of the status quo and outside the mainstream, he said, but the Tea Party is “the performance of a social movement without the substance.”²⁰ This paper refers to the Tea Party as a movement, for lack of a better term.

Are Tea Partiers Like Most Americans?

The percentage of the population that comprises the Tea Party is debatable. Right-leaning pollster Scott Rasmussen found, “over half of the electorate now say they favor the Tea Party movement, around 35 percent say they support the movement, 20 to 25 percent

¹⁷ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000) 31-47.

¹⁸ Kay Schlozman, interview with author, June 15, 2011.

¹⁹ See Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (University of Illinois Press, 1986) and Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985)

²⁰ Tim McCarthy, interview with the author, July 8, 2011.

self-identify as members of the movement, and 2 to 7% say they are activists.”²¹ The New York Times/CBS poll found that 18 percent of Americans identify themselves as part of the Tea Party.²² Eight in ten Tea Party supporters identify as leaning or voting Republican,²³ in contrast to claims that they are Independents. A more recent 2011 survey found that 29 percent of Americans say the Tea Party “shares their values.”²⁴ 78 percent of Americans have neither donated money nor attended a Tea Party meeting or rally.²⁵ One of the difficulties when examining data between polls is the semantic differences between support, identify, lean, etc. This paper relies mainly on the New York Times/CBS poll but occasionally includes others, meaning that most respondents to opinion poll questions merely identify with the movement.

Demographically, polls conflict over the exact generational nature of the movement, but generally agree that Tea Partiers are more likely to be older. A 2010 *USA Today*/Gallup poll found that 50% of respondents who identified as a Tea Party supporter were 50 years of age or older, against 47% of all American adults.²⁶ A New York Times/CBS poll, which grouped age slightly differently in its question, found that 75 percent of members were 45 and older, a

²¹ Scott Rasmussen and Douglas Schoen, *Mad As Hell: How the Tea Party Movement is Fundamentally Remaking our Two Party System* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010) 111.

²² Kate Zernike and Megan Thee-Brenan, “Poll finds Tea Party backers wealthier and more educated,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html>

²³ Frank Newport, “Tea Party supporters overlap Republican base,” Gallup July 2, 2010 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/141098/tea-party-supporters-overlap-republican-base.aspx>

²⁴ Dan Merica, “Survey: 3 in 10 Americans identify with Occupy, Tea Party movements,” CNN, citing poll by the Public Religion Research Institute, November 17, 2011 <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/17/survey-a-third-of-americans-identify-with-occupy-tea-party-movements/>. Coincidentally, Occupy Wall Street supporters shared an identical portion of respondents.

²⁵ “Polling the Tea Party,” *The New York Times*, CBS/NY Times polling, April 14, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/04/14/us/politics/20100414-tea-party-poll-graphic.html?ref=politics#tab=9>

²⁶ Lydia Saad, “Tea Partiers are fairly mainstream in their demographics,” Gallup, April 5, 2010. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/127181/tea-partiers-fairly-mainstream-demographics.aspx#1>. For criticism of this survey, see footnote 18.

positive difference of 25 percent above all respondents.²⁷ They are slightly more likely to be male (59 percent male to 41 percent female²⁸ and 55 percent male to 45 percent female²⁹, respectively). 20 percent of Tea Party respondents in the New York Times/CBS poll reported earnings of \$100,000 a year or more, a difference of 6 percent above all respondents. While the movement is generally older, slightly more male, and wealthier, the disparities are not large enough to explain away the ideological contrasts with the whole electorate.

Turning to opinion polling, the greatest differences of opinion between Tea Party members and the electorate at large are around questions that are perceptual or abstract. 92 percent of Tea Party respondents said they preferred a smaller government providing fewer services to a larger government providing more services, a position with which 50 percent of all respondents agreed.³⁰ Smaller government, in the abstract, divorced from a discussion of what programs survive a swath of cuts, is easy to agree with.

On questions of perception, the Tea Party again has huge splits with the rest of the nation. 88 percent of Tea Partiers disapprove of the way Obama is handling the presidency, compared with only 40 percent of all respondents.³¹ Staggering majorities of Tea Party members have low favorability of the president and the Democratic Party, disapprove of his handling of the economy and healthcare, believe he has expanded government too far, and believe the country is now closer to socialism, at much higher levels than all respondents. 96 percent of Tea Party members also disapprove of Congress, compared with 73 percent of all respondents. More Tea Party members disapprove of their own representative than approve

²⁷ New York Times/CBS Poll

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Saad, "Fairly mainstream"

³⁰ New York Times/CBS poll

³¹ Ibid.

of him (49 percent to 40 percent, respectively), a challenge to Fenno's paradox that citizens disdain Congress in the abstract but adore their own representatives³². The ideologically conservative, operationally liberal label apparently still holds for Tea Party members angry at the size of government but happy with their Medicare checks, as this paper argues.³³

The single biggest difference between Tea Party members and all respondents in the survey: while 84 percent of Tea Partiers believe their views represented those of a majority of Americans, only 25 percent of all respondents agree, a difference of a whopping 59 percentage points.³⁴ A quick look at the survey suggests that while Tea Party views on concrete economic policies are in line with a majority of Americans, the persistent distrust, disapproval, and anger at government is something most Americans do not share. By contrast, as the paper argues, there is agreement on specific policy proposals.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire's bicameral state legislature, the General Court, has 424 members, making it by far the largest state legislature in the nation and one of the world's largest deliberative bodies.³⁵ The House has 400 members and the Senate, 24. It has a relatively small population of 1.3 million,³⁶ meaning that there are fewer citizens per legislator than almost any other state. The "Live Free or Die State" has its share of libertarianism, including the Free State Project, a movement that hopes to gain 20,000 libertarian settlers in the state in order to affect its politics.³⁷ Despite recent prominence as a swing state, it was reliable for

³² Richard Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*, (Little, Brown 1978).

³³ The preceding paragraph cites exclusively the New York Times/CBS poll.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ New Hampshire State Library, "State government overview," *New Hampshire Almanac* <http://www.nh.gov/nhinfo/stgovt.html>

³⁶ US Census Bureau, "New Hampshire," population 1,318,194 at 2011 estimate. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33000.html>

³⁷ Free State Project, "Our Mission," <http://freestateproject.org/intro>.

Democratic presidential nominees, having last gone Republican for George H. W. Bush.³⁸

After the 2008 election, Democrats controlled both chambers of the General Court as well as three of four members of the state's Congressional delegation, with Republican Sen. Judd Gregg the lone exception.³⁹

No state in the 2010 elections shifted as far rightward as New Hampshire.⁴⁰ The House shifted to 298 Republicans and 102 Democrats in 2010 from 224 Democrats and 176 Republicans in 2008,⁴¹ the largest swing between parties in the state House since 1874.⁴² University of New Hampshire professor of political science Dante Scala describes how Sen. Kelly Ayotte's Republican primary defined the state's races:

"While incumbent Democratic governor John Lynch won a historic fourth term, it was Ayotte's victory that set the tone up and down the ticket. The New Hampshire GOP, which seemed on the verge of becoming the state's minority party after consecutive losses in 2006 and 2008, swept both House seats and regained control of both houses of the state legislature by wide margins."⁴³

The New Hampshire Tea Party and its affiliate organizations can take some credit for the intense primary fight for Ayotte's seat, which seemed to energize the whole slate of candidates. To explain Tea Party people's effect on the midterms, Scala quotes Drew Cline, editorial page editor of the *New Hampshire Union Leader*:

"They're more or less libertarian in their leanings. And they came out in strong numbers. But they were joined, in also very strong numbers, by social conservatives. And I think those two combined had a really big impact in 2010, at all levels ..."⁴⁴

³⁸ Dante Scala, "Mama Grizzly Nearly Trapped: New Hampshire's Republican Senate Primary," in *Key States, High Stakes: Sarah Palin, the Tea Party, and the 2010 Elections* ed. Charles Bullock III (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012) 14

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Chris Palko, "Can Romney claim a conservative win in New Hampshire?" *Campaigns and Elections* January 10, 2012 <http://www.campaignsandelections.com/campaign-insider/287907/can-romney-claim-a-conservative-win-in-nh.shtml>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² New Hampshire Secretary of State Bill Gardner, interview with the author in the Capitol building, June 13, 2011.

⁴³ Dante Scala, "New Hampshire: The Swing State Swings Right," in *Pendulum Swing* ed. Larry J. Sabato (Boston: Longman, 2011) 334.

⁴⁴ Scala, "Mama Grizzly," in *Key States, High Stakes*, 18.

While Tea Partiers had an important effect in mobilizing the electorate, Scala notes that their candidate of choice, the anti-establishment Ovid Lamontagne, never received the national backing or funding necessary to topple the Sarah Palin-endorsed Ayotte, in part due to lack of organization among the Tea Parties.⁴⁵ It is little more than a bulletin board of like-minded circles:⁴⁶ the New Hampshire Tea Party Coalition claims affiliation with forty groups on its web site⁴⁷, including those of a conservative social lean, such as Cornerstone Action.

Tea Party-affiliated groups that influence the legislature include the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance, the House Republican Alliance, and the Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire. The first two groups publish scorecards of all legislators based on the correspondence of their roll call votes to the group's platform. The Liberty Caucus is a chapter of the national Republican Liberty Caucus and gives primary candidates an ideological test. Candidates receive endorsements from the group based on their score. A distinctive House caucus that came up during interviews is the Natural Rights Council, of which Rep. Andrew Manuse is a leader.⁴⁸ Secretary of State Bill Gardner said there were a few legislators distinctly in each of the groups, but with overlap because there's no official Tea Party caucus in the House.⁴⁹ He estimated that legislators may claim affiliation with the Tea Party disingenuously, saying, "They just say they're Tea Party because it has such a connection to the founding of the country."

⁴⁵ Ibid. 23. The primary pitted the establishment Ayotte, who received backing from Palin, against Lamontagne, a local Tea Party favorite. In the battle of roving Tea Party diplomat Palin and the grassroots Tea Party, Palin won.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 19. He writes, "The New Hampshire Tea Party Coalition is best understood as an umbrella for numerous conservative groups, and the coalition itself has refrained from endorsing candidates and getting involved in elections and thus, from building the organization needed to be effective. Participants in the coalition primarily communicate via e-mail lists to encourage turnout at events and to identify volunteers."

⁴⁷ New Hampshire Tea Party Coalition, "Member Groups," <http://www.nhteapartycoalition.org/tea/about-join/member-groups/>.

⁴⁸ At the time this paper goes to print, the Natural Rights Council web site is defunct, though meetings of the caucus occur weekly. <http://www.naturalrightscouncil.org/>

⁴⁹ Gardner interview

Confirming Skocpol's thesis that Tea Partiers challenged establishment and moderate Republicans in backing conservative challengers,⁵⁰ Gardner noted that New Hampshire's Tea Party took the same approach. "What they did was they targeted a dozen Republicans and knocked off most of them in the primary," he said, including moderate Rep. Cynthia Dokmo of Amherst.⁵¹ Gardner found the character of the House to have shifted following the 2010 elections. Many of the freshman had "never been elected to anything, with no local official experience," he said. Members of both parties used to coningle and sit beside one another in session, he recalled, but now sit according to party affiliation. Gardner also explained how the process of getting elected and governing has changed with new technology such as blogging. "It's not the old way, that is, meetings at someone's house," he said. "Debates are not that good because they [legislators] don't have to be good speakers" to win an election, he added.

Though Tea Party passion may have strained the bonds of collegiality in the House, this paper finds that the New Hampshire legislators have a profound sense of respect for holding office, serving their constituents, and preserving the unique political character of their state. Before introducing these legislators, the paper turns to a description of the interviews and an outline of the contents to follow.

A Discourse on the Method

This thesis represents an undertaking over twelve months in the making. It first slowly gained steam in the spring of 2011 when I met with political science professor Shep Melnick to discuss the possibility of researching the Tea Party's anger. Together we attended two research presentations by Harvard professor Theda Skocpol and doctoral candidate Vanessa

⁵⁰ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 155-189.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Williamson, whose work on the Tea Party's composition was then in its final drafts.⁵² Their assimilation of Tea Party web sites and compilation of opinion polling data serve as excellent data sets of non-elected participants against which to compare the views of other groups. Melnick suggested examining the influence of the Tea Party in New Hampshire elections at the state level, as 2010 had not only brought massive change in Washington but also one of the largest shifts in party control that the state house had ever seen. Controversial statements by these newly elected legislators with little prior political experience puzzled Melnick, a long-time resident of the Granite State and himself a former state House representative. Together we determined that independent statistical analysis by an undergraduate might prove too fruitless to warrant significant attention and would not be nearly as interesting as the explanatory, analytical style of political science scholarship we both relish. Thus, a plan to interview New Hampshire legislators went into motion, and a grant from the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy provided for my travel around New Hampshire during the summer of 2011.

Together Melnick and I met with New Hampshire's longtime Secretary of State, Bill Gardner, who gave put the recent electoral swing in context and offered contacts of Tea Party people currently serving in the state house. Governor John Lynch was also kind enough to stop by and lauded the topic as one of particular pertinence to him. Boston College professor Kay Schlozman assisted in formulating a protocol of questions for the interviews and gave an excellent explanation that the importance of taxing and spending by the government is only the tip of the iceberg of a whole range of other concerns, an argument this paper deploys

⁵² Alexis de Tocqueville Lecture March 23, 2011 and the April 28, 2011 meeting of the Boston Area Research Workshop on History, Institutions, and Politics, both at Harvard University. For description of the events, see Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, xi.

throughout each chapter. Noted social movements scholar Tim McCarthy of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government gave me a crash-course in social movement theory, diagnosing the Tea Party not as a genuine social movement but something else. He also led a riveting discussion on the Tea Party at a Catherine Opie exhibit at Boston's Institute for Contemporary Arts, which I attended with Clough Center director and political science professor Ken Kersch. During the arduous process of Institutional Review Board certification for the interviews, I read up on the social science literature addressing the culture war, historical social movements, party politics, and the recent work on the Tea Party.

All of these resources were extremely important in charting the course the project, but the words of the legislators themselves concretize its content. Political scientists can make extensive use of polls and the published cannon explaining them. They can also turn to nontraditional research sources such as newspaper and magazine stories, in an attempt to catch up with what is a recent and quickly developing movement. All of these tools only get us so far in attempts to understand the political beliefs of individuals. This is especially true for the Tea Party, a coalition whose members are more angry than they are offering one or two political remedies to policy problems. The raw numbers can only point to the fears, resentments, assumptions, and aspirations of Tea Party people – only sitting down with legislators and hearing their concerns completes the picture.

After receiving an initial list of contacts from Secretary Gardner, I started a two-fold process. I sent out a blanket email to all the legislators in the General Court, with the assistance of the clerk's office, giving a description of the project and interview process and a request for subjects to speak with me. At the same time, I followed up on a few specific Tea Party people Gardner outlined, notably Rep. Susan DeLemus and her husband Jerry, leader

of the Rochester 9/12 project, Rep. Andrew Manuse, and others. Because of their centrality to the issue at hand, some received phone calls and specifically addressed emails. The most common response was a lack of response – only about 20 legislators total responded to my queries at some level. Some, like the DeLemuses, ignored my voicemails on their personal phones. Manuse at first expressed reservations and refused to go into more detail with me, but became more comfortable after other legislators participated. Chapter One documents the responses of legislators to my queries and their statements from interviews.

The interviews lasted a minimum of thirty minutes, with additional time depending on the availability of the legislator and his willingness to go into detail. Each legislator consented to including his statements on the record in this paper, with knowledge in the initial email description that documented any risks the project might entail, in correspondence to IRB regulations. There was special care to avoid having legislators to sign any document, as that might decrease their willingness to participate in the project and elevate what was a routine conversation about their own previously stated political opinions into a secretive report. The Appendix lists the protocol used for each interview, which began with a simple question asking the legislator to explain how they first became interested in politics and what led them into office. In some cases, legislators asked for more information about the project at the beginning of the interview and then immediately offered their conclusions about the Tea Party. The location of the interview was always to the convenience of the subject, with some legislators preferring to meet at the State House in Concord, some inviting me into their homes, and some at a nearby establishment.

The protocol asked only generic questions, such as what policies at the state and federal level they thought needed fixing. This allowed them to go in depth on current topical matters

like state budget debate, federal spending, and even social issues. Rather than directly prompt each legislator to offer their take on abortion, for example, whether they brought it up in the discussion was an important barometer of how heavily these concerns weigh on their political radar. In the case of abortion, since it came up only once, and in relation to the Affordable Care Act, the lack of discussion was itself worthy of documentation.

The project also has drawbacks, strong enough to prevent sweeping conclusions from but minor enough to allow for comparison to broader trends and established political science research. First, the lack of uniform questions on social issues such as abortion and gay marriage meant that there was no framing for how legislators would address them. This meant that some legislators had nothing to say on a given topic, say drug policy, while others did, preventing comparison between the two. As discussed above, this is a hidden strength, because it permits an examination of whether or not the issue comes up at all. By explicitly addressing social issues, the interviewer may exaggerate their level of importance by forcing a response where one might not have been necessary at all.

Second, the small scope of the interviews in proportion to the enormous size of the General Court prevents analysis of the chamber as a whole. As the first chapter indicates in detail, there was a litany of negative responses to my request for participants in the project, with the most common response being a lack of response. The six legislators with whom I spoke may indeed represent just a particular wing of the Republicans in the House, or they may not represent any particular faction at all. These conclusions are not likely, however, given that their responses indicate an association with other particular legislators. Legislative scorecards demonstrate that one legislator is not alone in his ultra-conservative, almost radical libertarian views, at least when it comes to voting patterns in the House. The

Republican Liberty Caucus, for example, endorses candidates based on their score on an ideological survey.⁵³ This means that the few legislators in this survey who have received the endorsement share a common ideology with a sizable portion of the General Court.

In particular, the lack of any female respondents to the interview limits a diverse swath of legislators. The lack of Democrats in the survey was intentional – though comparisons between Democrats and Republicans in the General Court could shed light on party differences and the rightward track of the Republican Party, such inclusions would be a far more complex undertaking than the narrow confines on this project.

The absence of Senators in the project is also a limiting factor, since none responded positively to my request. Again, this would expand the project's narrow focus too far, as a full investigation of differences between the House and Senate would follow and distract from comparisons between legislators and voters. The prevalence of caucuses and their endorsements of Senate candidates in addition to House candidates at least shed some light on what are likely similar ideological concerns, though the much smaller size of the Senate increases the difficulty that those lacking deep political connections can simply stroll through the primary.

Third, the peculiarity of New Hampshire's political culture itself is a limiting factor that prevents some broader conclusions. Since the General Court is so large and representatives account for so few citizens, there is a level of access and interaction between legislator and constituent not possible anywhere else. This also significantly decreases barriers to holding

⁵³ In the Republican primary, the Republican Liberty Caucus endorsed 153 candidates to an array of state positions, 134 of whom won their primary elections and 107 won their general elections, including 99 House representatives. Reps. in this paper that received an endorsement include Reps. Spec Bowers, Andrew Manuse, and Kyle Tasker. Since the Republican Liberty Caucus relies on an ideological survey score to determine endorsement, these three legislators represent a sizable faction. See "Republican Liberty Caucus Celebrates Rebirth of Common Sense in New Hampshire," Republican Liberty Caucus, April 2010. <http://rlcnh.org/press-releases/republican-liberty-caucus-celebrates-re-birth-of-common-sense-in-new-hampshire/>

political office, as with such a huge number of mildly contested races it makes the chance of winning an election much greater. Much of the explanatory power of the paper is in drawing distinctions between how legislators and voters who associate with the Tea Party differ ideologically, a distinction that rests on extensive political science literature on the partisanship of elites in comparison to the average American.⁵⁴ If the political culture in New Hampshire is one that allows close communication between legislator and constituent and a political scene that is by no means professional, how then can the paper draw traditional elite/average distinctions?

Numerous levels of self-selection help make the divide more concrete, even given New Hampshire's distinct culture. Seeking political office, even in New Hampshire, is still a time-consuming process that requires some level of connection, capability, and interest in politics rare among the majority of citizens who do not run in an election. Further, identifying with or seeking agreement with the Tea Party is another factor that increases the chances that the legislators are distinct from most Americans. Finally, agreeing to participate in a project of a suspiciously liberal college student suggests a certain level of comfort in defending political views and a certain trust that controversial statements will not reach constituents. The distinction between Tea Party activists – those who attend rallies, run meetings, fundraise significantly, etc. – and legislators who the Tea Party endorses or who even loosely affiliate with their ideology is not great.⁵⁵ Both of these groups would be political elites under the traditional definition of the term. But the differences between Tea Party supporters more broadly and legislators are quite large and would be even surprising to the former group.

⁵⁴ Fiorina, *Culture War?*

⁵⁵ The ideology difference between Rep. Susan DeLemus and her husband Jerry DeLemus, a vocal Tea Party leader in the state, is probably not great.

A fourth limiting factor is the difficulty in comparing opinion polls of a national scope with legislators serving in just one peculiar state. Some opinion polls of Tea Partiers nationwide ask the right questions in the right way, but one cannot assume that they apply equally to New Hampshire residents. Given the state's libertarian streak and unique political culture, a smaller sample size within its borders of Tea Party people may yield different or more exaggerated results than national opinion polls. State legislators may also have different views in different states, with the libertarian culture of New Hampshire inflating the potential that legislators hold radical views such as the desire to legalize marijuana.

A fifth and final dilemma is the quality of public opinion polls themselves and the loose association many poll respondents and the legislators of this project may express with the Tea Party. Polling offers an obvious advantage as a quantifiable, stable control set against which to compare the anecdotal statements of legislators themselves. But they tend to overestimate support and conflate association with participation – one poll gauged 37 percent of respondents in viewing the movement favorably.⁵⁶ Polls this paper uses include ones with obvious right-leaning tendencies,⁵⁷ polls deemed objective,⁵⁸ and amalgamations and analysis of polls.⁵⁹ Though Skocpol argues that Tea Partiers are hard conservatives, in contrast to polls that try to cast them as political moderates, this paper argues that the tenor of the conservatism is different from that of elected officials. Tea Party people are conservatives

⁵⁶ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 144. Skocpol and Williamson cite Adele Stan, "The Tea Party Movement: A Force to Be Reckoned With," *Huffington Post*, May 7, 2010. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adele-stan/the-tea-party-movement-a_b_567441.html

⁵⁷ Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad As Hell*

⁵⁸ New York Times/CBS poll

⁵⁹ Emily McClintok Ekins, "The Character and Origins of the Tea Party Movement," a working paper Prepared for delivery at the 2011 Midwest Political Science Association Meetings; Palmer House Chicago, Illinois, March 31st-April 3rd 2011. Ekins is a graduate student of political science at UCLA.

and vote Republican – they are not independents – a point Skocpol makes persuasively.⁶⁰ But this paper argues that strictly ideology is not in the main a driving force for their conservatism, which rests instead on cultural, perceptual feelings about the direction of the country. The above opinion data indicates that when given specific policy choices, Tea Partiers are indeed more conservative than most Americans, but not the ultimate die-hards Skocpol suggests they are. This may be true of the small, active core, and of the legislators in this paper, but not those who merely associate with the Tea Party.

Outline

In what follows, the paper compares the views of legislators and Tea Party people in four areas: the Constitution, economic and fiscal matters, social issues, and race and immigration. Chapter 1 introduces the legislators, outlining the personal history of each: how they first came to be interested in politics, what decided to make them run for office, the process of campaigning, and what their most important priorities are in New Hampshire. The chapter also looks at how their views might have changed or grown with political experience and draws parallels between the legislators. The chapter finds several distinct categories of Republican representative, but two main camps for the purposes of the argument.

One group is very conservative on fiscal issues and libertarian on social issues. They do not share the Tea Party fear for the direction of the country. While they share distaste for President Obama with Tea Partiers, it is more so out of policy opposition than it is an emotional reaction based on his race or other concurrent social factors. They have strong support from Tea Party groups and identify strongly with the movement as a whole. They

⁶⁰ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. For polling in comparison to other methodologies, pp. 13-14. For the problems of opinion surveys on the Tea Party, see 143-149, “The Use and Misuse of Surveys.”

espouse radical policies – legalization of drugs, total erosion of the welfare state – that the older, conservative Tea Party voters would reject.

The other camp is a mix of three moderates – one is a strong Tea Party supporter, another loosely associates, and the third is a moderate who does not claim affiliation. They are socially conservative – they oppose gay marriage in New Hampshire, they fear the applicability of foreign laws in the state, and they have concerns for their grandchildren's future in America. They match closely the perceptual concerns of Tea Party voters, but they do not support the brave new world of the other camp. They all specifically mentioned support for the welfare state, they have technocratic concerns about environmental and education policy, but they all supported New Hampshire's recent budget.

Chapter 2 takes a more philosophical turn, investigating the Tea Party's view of history and the Constitution. Tea Partiers have an emotional, religious attachment to a mythical Founding and they treat the Constitution as if it were a sacred text. All of the legislators who associated with the Tea Party, from both the moderate and libertarian camps, mentioned reverence for the Constitution. It is the most consistent correlation between the voters and the legislators. It is also a historical revisionist view, ready to leave out blemishes on the Founding such as slavery and the second-class status of women and cast doubt on the Civil War and Lincoln.

Chapter 3 tackles the main point of Tea Party grievances – high spending by government and high levels of taxation. It draws heavily on a thesis Skocpol advances, that Tea Partiers are not opposed to welfare wholesale but rather perceive that some recipients are deserving of government support and some are not. Those that work hard and play by the rules deserve Social Security, in this light, but illegal immigrants, grafters, and corporations did not play by

the rules and thus do not deserve welfare. All of the legislators echoed this view, but had varying levels of support for social spending. They support lower taxes and they all supported the Republican budget cuts in New Hampshire that passed in 2011. The chapter also offers some relationships between economic decline and social anxiety, which may in part account for the Tea Party's rise after the 2007-2008 recession. While Tea Partiers largely support smaller government and lower taxes in the abstract, when it comes to specific policy proposals, they line up with a plurality of Americans in their support for key institutions including Social Security and Medicare.

Chapter 4 turns to social issues: abortion, gay marriage, and drug policy. The first two are widely documented as the most salient, controversial culture war topics; the third is an issue that seems to crop up among several of the Tea Party-affiliated New Hampshire legislators. Tea Partiers in general split on social issues, but a plurality are moderates. They support abortion, but with limits; they support civil unions, but not gay marriage. Specifically, it is their libertarian philosophy on drug policy that would alienate the older, socially conservative voters who comprise most of the Tea Party. Still, social issues assume a secondary role to economic concerns, but that does not mean they are absent from consideration. Unease about changing relations and traditional institutions, including marriage, colors some of the angry responses of many Tea Partiers. While the small government message of Tea Party influenced candidates' appeals to these voters on the same emotional level, their consistent application to all facets of life runs contrary to the moderation most Americans have on an array of specific policies.

A study of the Tea Party would not be complete without addressing its largest criticism, that of racial stigmatism's role in garnering membership, which is the subject of Chapter 5.

While there are small minorities of Tea Partiers who are vocally racist at rallies, for example, they are marginal. This does not mean that racial considerations have no influence – they are bound up with the same social anxieties triggered by social issues like gay marriage. The changing face of the nation from immigration and the first black president simply add up to an America that does not look the same, that does not feel the same. While Tea Partiers are empirically more likely to have negative views of racial minorities, they are also more likely to have negative views of all Americans, of Congress, of the President, and the direction of the nation. They are simply more likely to be angry and fearful, and race is one factor among several that contribute to this mindset.

Chapter 1: New Hampshire's Legislators

Before moving to examine the beliefs of Tea Party legislators, this chapter presents a brief history of each legislator, beginning with their first interest in politics, moving to the process of organizing a campaign and running for office, and concluding with their thoughts on the practice of governance. Since the enormous size of New Hampshire's General Court makes ascension to the chamber easier than in states with smaller legislatures, attempting to draw parallels to the broader Tea Party slate of statewide officials would be fruitless. Instead, the interviews reveal among these particular legislators a life-long interest in politics, though not necessarily prior elected experience. At the onset of their campaigns, they received little outside support and had to campaign largely by their own means. Though the election of freshman representatives in the swing of 2010 came with an important mandate to fulfill certain ideological barometers, instead of displaying total rigidity, the freshmen interviewed discovered processes of compromise and cooperation similar to those elected earlier. Most importantly, each subject had a profound sense of commitment to serving his constituents and maintaining New Hampshire's unique political character. Though most likely more ideologically extreme than the electorate that put them in office, their pride in finding solutions to important state problems stands in contrast to media portrayals of Tea Party officials as uncompromising or a new breed of Jacobins, ready to burn down the state.⁶¹ As

⁶¹ Mark Lilla, "The Tea Party Jacobins," review of several titles: *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* by Bill Bishop; *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again* by David Frum; *Arguing with Idiots: How to Stop Small Minds and Big Government* by Glenn Beck and Kevin Balfe; *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism* by Marc J. Hetherington; and *Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement that Shattered the Party* by Max Blumenthal. *The New York Review of Books*, May 7, 2010. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/may/27/tea-party-jacobins/>. Lilla writes, "The new Jacobins have two classic American traits that have grown much more pronounced in recent decades: blanket distrust of institutions and an astonishing—and unwarranted—confidence in the self. They are apocalyptic pessimists about public life and childlike optimists swaddled in self-esteem when it comes

subsequent chapters document their opinions on a range of issues, this chapter confines its scope merely to providing a context for those views.

Ralph Boehm

“I don’t really care about the GOP platform.”⁶²

From my first email conversation with Rep. Ralph Boehm, through our interview and ending with our parting remarks, what was abundantly clear was his pride and affection for his grandchildren, one of whom is a fellow student at Boston College. A veteran of the Air Force, Boehm first became involved in politics as a local selectman from 1988 to 1995 and on his town’s budget advisory committee 1987 to 2003. His concern for his grandchildren also led him to seek office on his local school board, a position he assumed in 2004.⁶³

Boehm said that between ten and fifteen years ago, “a state rep said I should have his seat” but he did not seriously consider the idea until 2002. At that time, however, his local town of Litchfield had just undergone redistricting, and Boehm felt that the move decreased the likely success of a campaign. He ran two years later, in 2004, and won a House seat, but lost a reelection bid in 2006. In describing his inspiration in seeking political office, he mentioned concern for his grandchildren and the quality of their education. Citing the low

to their own powers.” Conversely, legislators who affiliate with the Tea Party in New Hampshire have great faith in the political process, uniquely so in New Hampshire.

⁶² Ralph Boehm interview, August 4, 2011. All of the quotations in this chapter come from the interviews, unless otherwise noted in footnotes. Where there are not direct quotations, the paper summarizes the statements given without detailing the exact wording.

⁶³ Northeast Information Services. *The Handbook of New Hampshire Elected Officials 2011 & 2012* (Concord, 2012) 29. Commonly referred to as the “Blue Book,” all subsequent footnotes will reference it as the “Blue Book.” The text lists all the currently serving members of the General Court, House and Senate, with brief biographies submitted by the legislators themselves and, if the legislator is an incumbent serving a consecutive term, their positions on select roll call votes from the previous session. The depth of biographic details legislators provide to the Blue Book varies, which makes the interviews important for ascertaining a complete picture of their background. The Book also provides a way to check the accuracy of their statements in interviews, as sometimes the exact terms of office become inexact.

compensation for state representatives, Boehm joked, “You don’t do it for the money in New Hampshire.”

He successfully ran again in 2008 and won reelection in 2010 during the large Republican wave of victories. Because of redistricting, he currently represents a grouping of three towns: Hudson, Litchfield, and Pelham. Boehm receives some money from the state Republican Party but he said, “No [individual] offers me any money. The New Hampshire Liberty Alliance gave me fifty bucks.” He also said the county Republican Party puts advertisements in the newspaper on his behalf.

As his statement above indicates, Boehm voiced little concern for adherence to the Republican Party platform. He scores high on the House Republican Alliance scorecard but said he is representing the conservative views of his constituents. Boehm received an 88 percent rating from the House Republican Alliance, placing him near the middle of the pack of Republican representatives, but still closely in line with the party platform.⁶⁴ He received a B+ grade on the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance scorecard.⁶⁵ “I’m a libertarian except for

⁶⁴ New Hampshire House Republican Alliance, “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, Interim through July 5, 2011,” http://www.nhhra.org/Scorecards/Scorecard_110705.pdf. The HRA web site description states, “During a legislative session, each State Representative votes on specific legislation brought before the House. Some of these votes are roll calls where each vote is recorded. This allows us to compare a legislator’s voting record to the NH State Constitution, traditional Republican values, and the NH State Party Platform. A grade of 100% indicates that a legislator voted in perfect conformity to the NH State Constitution, traditional Republican values, and the NH State Party Platform. On the other hand, a grade of 0% indicates that a legislator never voted with the NH State Constitution, traditional Republican values, or the NH State Party Platform,” http://www.nhhra.org/report_cards.htm. The actual methodology is the correspondence of a particular legislator’s vote to the voting recommendation of the HRA. Explaining the process of voting recommendations, the web site reads, “Through a process of open discussion among House Republicans, including regularly scheduled Tuesday morning meetings, the HRA evaluates and publishes voting recommendations on each item of legislation that will come before the House for an individual vote, and these recommendations are made available to legislative members before each session day (the Pink Sheet),” <http://www.nhhra.org/index.htm>.

⁶⁵ New Hampshire Liberty Alliance “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate,” http://www.nhliberty.org/sites/default/files/2011_Liberty_Rating.pdf. According to the document, the rating is “based on 56 roll call votes in the House and 22 in the Senate. Bills have been carefully selected for inclusion which clearly demonstrate the level of respect our elected representatives show for our individual rights and liberties.” The Alliance divides up and down positions in roll call votes as pro-liberty or anti-liberty, writing, “Pro-liberty votes protect individual freedom of choice and personal responsibility; recognize the superiority of

drug policy – it’s no different than 200 years ago,” Boehm said, explaining his beliefs in the context of the American Revolution. He also voiced a commitment to states’ rights and a limited scope of the federal government.

Despite his felicity to the views of his constituents, he also stressed the need for greater ethics reform at the state and federal level, criticizing politicians like Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) for holding the view that “the ethics are between me and my constituents,” as Boehm put it. As the next chapter details, Boehm also described himself as a constitutionalist, believing that laws should closely follow the letter of spirit of the state and federal constitutions.

Though Boehm mentioned reducing the size of the budget as one of his goals, his main commitment is to improving New Hampshire’s schools. Since the remainder of the paper does not address Tea Party views on education, I include Boehm’s comments on the topic here. Boehm serves as the vice chair of the House education committee⁶⁶ and criticized federal programs such as No Child Left Behind, saying, “The Department of Education is ruining education.” He argued that New Hampshire education does not measure up well in comparison to that of other states, when according to a recent report, it ranks ninth among states in overall quality of public education.⁶⁷ “Not a single high school in New Hampshire

freedom over coercion; respect the citizen’s right of selfownership; promote governance that is transparent, accountable, and adheres to the Constitution; and recognize the value of voluntary economic decisions. Anti-liberty votes replace self-governance with interventionist regulation; assume rules made by agencies backed by force are superior to voluntary choices backed by personal accountability; and assume a better economy can be managed by a central authority that compels people and businesses to pay for policies they may not willingly support.” For a complete breakdown of the votes on each roll call and the process by which each roll call went into formulating a composite score, see “2011 Scoring Sheet,” http://www.nhliberty.org/sites/default/files/2011_LR_Sheets.xls.

⁶⁶ Blue Book, 29.

⁶⁷ *Union Leader*, “NH education ranking slips from fourth to ninth,” January 24, 2012, <http://www.unionleader.com/article/20120124/NEWS04/701259999&source=RSS>, citing the American Legislative Exchange Council’s 17th annual report card.

made it into the top national 500,” he said in reference to annual rankings⁶⁸. On attempts to create a uniform core curriculum for all 50 states, Boehm said, “A lot of it is dumbing down. ‘Let’s make everybody the same.’ It’s code for ‘let’s make everybody stupid.’”

He proposed a number of potential education reforms, including decreasing the emphasis on what he called “social crap,” such as emotional education to combat bullying or information about global warming.⁶⁹ Boehm did not say that these areas of the curriculum should cease to exist at all, but rather that the emphasis in the first three years of schooling be solely on reading and writing, with room for exploration and advanced topics later. He also proposed that No Child Left Behind should track each individual student’s improvement from year to year, rather than aggregating scores by class to class, to account for variations in the quality of a given class. Instead of the federal government developing its own math curriculum and applying it to the states, for example, he said that states should simply copy the curriculums of other successful states. “Duh,” he argued, “we don’t need to spend money to study it” but can accomplish better educational quality by just modeling the best states. However, later in the interview he criticized the Claremont decisions for looking⁷⁰ at other state constitutions to address a stipulation of New Hampshire’s constitution. “I don’t care what we’re doing over there we have the oldest and best constitution.” Finally, Boehm advocated grading teachers on their performance. He added that a teacher with many degrees is not always successful, saying, “More education doesn’t always make better teachers.”

⁶⁸ No New Hampshire high school made the *Newsweek* top 500 in 2011. “America’s Best High Schools,” *The Daily Beast*, as published in *Newsweek*, June 19, 2011.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/features/2011/americas-best-high-schools.html>.

⁶⁹ Boehm Interview, “Don’t teach global warming – we don’t have global warming,” he added.

⁷⁰ A series of court decisions that found a right within New Hampshire’s constitution to equal educational access. For more information, see Claremont Lawsuit Coalition, “Claremont Court Decisions,” http://www.claremontlawsuit.org/claremont_court_decisions.htm.

Spec Bowers

“If you look too professional in New Hampshire, you don’t look real.”⁷¹

The rain was pouring as I pulled up to the lakeside home of Rep. Spec Bowers, a freshman Republican member of the House who has lived near Lake Sunapee since 1999. The pristine region is far from the bustle of Concord or Manchester, and its weaving roads and impossible pattern of house numbering contribute to the remote feel. Bowers said he’s been visiting and vacationing in New Hampshire since childhood, dating to around 1962, but only moved to the state full-time in 1989, a shift that changed his politics as well as his scenery. Before 1980 he lived in Baltimore and labeled himself a conservative – “I’m a conservative in my genes – I inherited it from my parents.” Bowers is a veteran of the Navy and attended Yale University, graduating with a degree in computer science and electrical engineering.⁷²

He early on took sample political ideology tests to quantify his beliefs, scoring 100% on the American Conservative Union quiz and 100% on a libertarian survey. This loose, ideological embrace took on a more concrete form in the late 1970s, when he started writing letters to the editor at local newspapers expressing his opinion on timely political issues. His views changed when he frequented and eventually relocated to Chelmsford, Massachusetts in 1980, identifying more as a libertarian than as a conservative. He stressed that he became what he called a “small-l libertarian,” one who ideologically favored small government without membership in the Libertarian Party.

⁷¹ Spec Bowers Interview, August 15, 2011. This attribution informs the rest of the section, except where otherwise noted.

⁷² Blue Book, 30.

Bowers moved to New Hampshire in 1989, eventually settling in Sunapee in 1999. His first foray into campaigning was in the 2000 election, working for minor candidates but supporting Bush's overall effort. "I volunteered to be a foot soldier: knocking on doors, making phone calls," he said. "A few years later, I ran to be a state Republican convention delegate" and won his race with 25 write-in votes. By the beginning of 2008, a friend encouraged Bowers to run for a seat as a state representative. "I said, 'Are you crazy?'" but he eventually persuaded me. He said he wanted someone to vote the right way," Bowers explained. He heeded his friend's counsel and in 2008 ran for the state representative seat but lost in the primary. Between the two elections, he landed a position on the Sunapee Budget Advisory Committee⁷³, which earned him "some name recognition" in the area. Finally, in 2010 he ran uncontested in the House primary but still faced a challenge winning the general election. He was aided with an endorsement from the Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire, appearing on their election guides, though he did not mention the endorsement in the interview.⁷⁴

"The party mailed on my behalf but we're not allowed to coordinate," he explained, citing campaign finance rules that precluded direct cooperation between the state party and his campaign. "They didn't give me money, I raised a couple hundred from friends," he said. Bowers produced his own small mailer, a red, white, and blue postcard. "I knocked on doors, spent \$350 [out of pocket]." Bowers won the race against a Democratic opponent in one of the largest Republican electoral landslides in New Hampshire history.

⁷³ Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire, "Spec Bowers" <http://rlcnh.org/candidates/spec-bowers/>. The site endorsed Bowers in his first ever run based on his scoring above a certain threshold on a political ideology survey. His biography on the site, as well as in the Blue Book, mention his Naval service and Yale education, but he did not bring these up in the interview.

⁷⁴ Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire, "Endorsed Winners," <http://assets.manuse.com/pdf/EndorsedGenElecWinners.pdf>.

Bowers said he “absolutely” identifies with the Tea Party, having first attended a 4/15 rally in Manchester and “lends his support” to a few other Tea Party groups in New Hampshire. He described the Tea Party’s appeal saying, “People think a or b, but they’re not alone. When you see people who agree with you, you’re not alone.” He said he personally found many at Tea Party rallies who are not registered to vote for a particular party but sympathize with the Republican Party – “small r republicans.” Bowers recalled a big sign he saw at the Manchester rally that depicted a credit card bearing the names of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and a limit that said \$9 trillion. “That’s what people are upset about,” he said, referring to government spending and debt.

Bowers said he is an independent thinker, despite his high rankings by conservative caucuses. He is a member of the House Republican Alliance, a caucus that includes “pretty much any GOP state rep,” and he estimated that 90 percent of Republicans vote in line with the HRA’s platform.⁷⁵ He received a 98 percent rating from the HRA on their annual score sheet⁷⁶ and an A rating in the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance report card, earning distinction as one of that group’s top 25 legislators.⁷⁷ Referring to freshman Republicans and those legislators who identify with the Tea Party, he said, “I don’t think we’re different from the broader GOP” when it comes to voting by the platform. He estimated that there were about 200 roll call votes in the first year of the current house, of which the HRA made a little over a hundred policy recommendations on specific votes.

⁷⁵ Gauging the veracity of this statement is difficult, because Republicans vary in the extent to which they vote with the HRA line. For specifics, see the HRA scorecard.

⁷⁶ “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011.”

⁷⁷ “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate.”

Despite the correlation between the party platform and voting patterns by legislators like Bowers, he added, “We make up our own minds. I look at the recommendations to see if they’re right.” He’s also a member of the Natural Rights Council with colleague Andrew Manuse, a group Bowers describes as committed to the second amendment to the New Hampshire state constitution and adherence to the US constitution more generally. Bowers also claims membership in the House Business Coalition, a more moderate, commerce-focused caucus.

On his relationship with his constituents, Bowers said that he reflects their opinions. “There are 3,000 [residents] in Sunapee. We’re known better than reps in other states,” he said, referring to the large size of the General Court in relation to the state’s population. Constituents send him email requests to vote one way or the other, which inform the conservative stance he takes. On ideology, he concludes, “there’s not a big difference between legislators and voters.” Despite this overlap, Bowers did note that there he once faced accusations of being a Free Stater, but answered that he’s been in New Hampshire long before the Free State movement took root.

When describing policy matters, Bowers displayed allegiance to his conservative worldview but also expressed a genuine interest in solving problems. His plans for trimming the budget, which a later chapter will discuss, show the need for compromise and prioritization, rather than the all-or-nothing approach that the media finds in most elected officials with Tea Party ties. In parting words, he noted the importance of holding politicians accountable for how they spin spending and taxation, criticizing the debt debate in Washington as one that sells spending decreases but actually delivers smaller increases in spending. Like other Tea Party insurgents (and most members of Congress), Bowers put

distance between himself and politicians, despite his office, with the need to hold their feet to the fire on important issues. He concluded our conversation in speaking of New Hampshire legislators generally, explaining, “We don’t like to call ourselves politicians. Our obituary will say ‘politician’ and ignore all the good things. [My tenure] won’t be long term.”

John Burt

“I’m worried my grandkids won’t live in the same America I did.”⁷⁸

In Rep. John Burt’s front yard is a giant campaign sign emblazoned with his name, a sign that he made for his 2010 freshman House campaign, next to a large, rusty tractor. If Scott Brown staked his campaign on a pickup truck, Burt had him bested.

Burt called himself “an old Vermont Republican,” harkening back to the days when Vermont was a more Republican state, before its more recent Bernie Sanders turn. Burt cites the conservative politics of Vermont in the 1960s and 1970s, where he grew up as a child, in contrast to its more liberal politics today. He summed up Vermont’s conservatism and ethos of self-reliance: “Don’t reach to government for a handout.”⁷⁹ While Sen. Patrick Leahy is Vermont’s first and only Democratic Senator in its history, it is hard to argue, however, that the state has ever recently had a whiff of significant conservatism.

“When I grew up, there was no borrowing” under President Reagan, he claimed erroneously and added that welfare spending was “out of control.”⁸⁰ This recollection of a better America extends into a fear over a future America, as the above quotation concerning his grandchildren demonstrates. What is worth stressing about Burt’s interview is how closely the rhetoric used to describe the direction in which the country is headed mirrors that

⁷⁸ John Burt Interview, August 2, 2011.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Chapter 3 explores the veracity of this statement.

used by Tea Party adherents nation-wide. With little political experience before his election, Burt is perhaps the best embodiment of the Tea Party temperament I encountered – not as moderate or deeply entrenched in the political establishment as others, but also not as ideologically rigid as some of the other legislators interviewed. While others expressed more ideological reasons for their Tea Party allegiance, Burt showed unease and anxiety that match those of the Tea Party masses.

In describing what led him to seek political office, Burt echoed a common Tea Party refrain, saying, “I saw the country going where I didn’t want it to go.” He wrote to newspapers expressing his views but got name recognition when he hosted a televised debate for the national Senate candidates. He took a class on the electoral process, which helped him learn the process of getting on the primary ballot and other basic campaign strategies. Lacking historical political experience or ties to the state party establishment, Burt raised all the money for his campaign on his own by soliciting donations from friends. He explained that he made the sign in his front yard – Burt owns a sign making business, which gave him a leg up in advertising over his opponents. In a district-wide race that featured a ballot of 17 candidates, Burt finished third, beating out six incumbents to represent Goffstown. He described his emphasis as seeking to reduce government spending and said he threw “both parties under the bus” for adding to federal debt.

When he assumed office, Burt, like many of his House Republican counterparts, joined the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance, receiving an A- grade on their scorecard.⁸¹ Burt has a 99 percent rating from the House Republican Alliance.⁸² Along with Bowers and Manuse, he is a member of the Natural Rights Council, which he described as 24 Republicans and “one

⁸¹ “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate.”

⁸² “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011.”

Democrat who doesn't vote with the group." He described the Natural Rights Council as focused on adherence to the Constitution and added "I believe in the Constitutional rights everyone deserves." Burt described a core group of conservative Republicans, an overlapping assortment of freshmen, Tea Partiers, and Natural Rights Council members as "testing and pushing the envelope all the time," seeking to overturn a large number of bills. By name, he mentioned Reps. Seth Cohn, Andrew Manuse, Laura Jones, and Mark Warden as Natural Rights Council members at the helm of this core of conservative Republicans with Tea Party ties. Don Gorman, a past state representative who teaches public speaking classes, meets with the Natural Rights Council to advise on how best to pass legislation, Burt said.

Burt's goals for office fall under a broader category of "bringing it back to Reagan," estimating that it could take between six and ten years to achieve that vision in New Hampshire. He mentioned a few pet projects he'd like to see as law, including the creation of a state bank, elimination of foreign laws (specifically, Sharia, a contention that a later chapter addresses), and Bill 145, an effort to prohibit the filming of state police officers. The desire for a state bank did not seem to cross Burt's mind as running contrary to his laissez-faire positions on the government's role in the economy. Burt supports the right of citizens to film and photograph encounters with police officers. Bizarrely, this emphasis on civil liberties puts him in alliance with some liberal Democrats who share his opinion that "the government and police have too much control."

Burt strongly supports the Tea Party and described its membership as broad, saying, "[The Tea Party] is everybody. Low taxes, pro-business, 'leave me alone.'" He also found a need to eliminate "RINOs"⁸³ from political office.

⁸³ Republicans In Name Only.

Despite his opposition to high government spending, Burt ironically did not see an inconsistency with his current employment. At the conclusion of the interview, Burt described his efforts to coordinate a Republican presidential primary debate in New Hampshire. He is the host of a public access television show that features primary debates and commentary on politics – a program that receives all of its funding from the government. Burt said it gives him a soap box to espouse political views publicly and added that “It’s community access. We don’t like to call it public access it turns people off.” The allure of a government-financed political soapbox, however, was not enough to dissuade the anti-spending Burt from running the show.

Chris Christensen

“Let’s do what’s right and not get hung up on ideology that nobody voted for.”⁸⁴

Of the legislators this paper highlights, Christensen is the one who expressed no affiliation with the Tea Party movement. He is one of the more senior legislators featured, having first assumed office in 2000. Christensen retired in 1999 after working for 25 years in the insurance industry, and he is a Navy veteran. “Like many in New Hampshire, I started out in a committee here and there and people seek out your help,” he said. Christensen chaired the committee for the 250th Anniversary of Merrimack and served on a local planning board from 1990 to 1996⁸⁵, which garnered him some name recognition and contacts. He was also a selectman for six years, from 1996 to 2001. “People said to go to Concord,” he recalled, and he went on to explain how many former state legislators and fellow retirees return to their localities as selectmen, expressing appreciation for the institution.

⁸⁴ Chris Christensen interview, August 22, 2011.

⁸⁵ Blue Book, 39.

Christensen received some campaign contributions from the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance and he is a member of the House Business Coalition, though he has attended a few meetings of other caucuses. Reflecting on his tenure in office, Christensen called his voting record consistent. “I’ve become more moderate but my wife said I’ve gotten more conservative. She’s gotten more liberal,” he joked. He has a B grade from the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance⁸⁶ and an 82 percent rating from the House Republican Alliance.⁸⁷

When he took office, Christensen faced the common decision of what committees to serve on. “People said do commerce, but I wanted something else long-term,” he said. He took up the cause of environmental protection with service on the Resources, Recreation, and Development committee, calling other issues “transient.” Conveying the moderate stance he takes environmental issues, he said, “We need clean water, we need to use resources responsibly. That doesn’t mean not to use them.” Christensen said New Hampshire is unique for grouping resource protection and development together under a single agency and that rather than compete for influence, the union promotes a cooperative synergy. Most the legislation is not sweeping but rather changes technical wording of existing legislation or updates taxes and fees associated with resource usage. Christensen offered one past example of such a minor repair: a constituent in the water-testing business contacted him over the fees state water testing laboratories charge for services. Essentially, the state charged fees at below the market price, which incentivized property owners to use state facilities instead of private ones, harming the constituent’s business. Christensen said it was “not fair that taxpayers subsidize that or [fair] for the business owner.”

⁸⁶ “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate.”

⁸⁷ “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011.”

Christensen also offered comments on the Tea Party and the relative inexperience of many freshman legislators this session. He said the ideas the Tea Party espouses and many of the movement's proponents have been around long before the tri-cornered hats, but it was unclear in his opinion for how long it would influence politics. He has mixed impressions of what exactly the Tea Party stands for, noting that he shares the movement's focus on taxation but that much of the popular appeal stems from social issue concerns. Christensen said his middle-of-the-road style and emphasis on "what's reasonable" has traction with legislators who served as selectmen prior to going to Concord. As a selectman, "you see what works for people of our town. It's not all pragmatism but [it's] that outlook" of finding common solutions rather than overtly partisan ones, he said. Addressing freshman legislators, he said, "They have less experience – just a feeling. They're younger and for whatever reason have time commitments." Christensen said many legislators have to learn to manage their time, working some days while spending Tuesday through Thursday in Concord. He also shared that he knows more legislators homeschooling their children, which detracts from the time they spend in the State House. Christensen said that most constituents now forward him their concerns via email, as opposed to a past norm of handwritten letters. He called constituents "concerned about themselves and neighbors" but said they are now more oriented to a particular political cause of an ideological nature than in the past.

Andrew Manuse

"I despise George Bush."⁸⁸

Initially, New Hampshire Secretary of State Bill Gardner recommended I speak to Rep. Andrew Manuse, who represents Derry, in seeking out information on New Hampshire's Tea

⁸⁸ Andrew Manuse interview, August 4, 2011.

Party legislators. Several other legislators mentioned Manuse during their interviews, and conservative legislative scorecards frequently list his name near the top. When I first contacted him via email seeking his assistance with the project, he expressed hesitance and did not want to reveal Republican party secrets. He wrote, “The process for recruitment and the politics behind our efforts is confidential and I would respectfully decline your request. Good luck in your research.”⁸⁹

I sent a follow up email, explaining that the thesis was not an expose of party campaign strategies but rather an attempt to understand how legislators who affiliated with the Tea Party came to be interested in politics and formed their beliefs. Manuse responded via email describing his political roots but initially declined my request to meet for an interview. This paper includes his original story here in its entirety:

“I got interested in politics after taking a Dystopian Fiction writing class during my freshman year at Niagara University. After reading *1984*, *Brave New World*, *Atlas Shrugged* and books just like them, I realized our world was far too close to the ‘fictional’ world in those books and I immediately got involved in politics in an attempt to restore the world I thought I lived in; that of a Constitutional Republic, where I own my life, my liberty and my property and no one can tell me what to do with it unless I infringe on their life, liberty or property. Then, the government and law can step in and determine how such a dispute should be settled. We have a long way to go to get back to these ideals, but at least in New Hampshire we have a head start: most people already want our Constitutional Republic to be restored here. Now, we just have to make the hard decisions to make it so. I suppose I always knew I’d run for office as soon as I knew the restorative change was needed. Why be an arm chair politician? No one accomplishes anything by screaming at the TV. I started writing letters to the editor, letters to my congressmen. Then, when I moved to New Hampshire and not one of my 11 representatives would even introduce a bill for me to correct a problem with our property assessment law, I decided I would run for state rep. and introduce the bill myself. Of course, my opposition to the destructive Obamacare act also fueled my activism and really led to my enthusiasm for office. What a great thing that in my very first year as a freshman representative in Derry, I not only introduced a law to fix the property assessment problem I found, I also passed it. HB 316 became law earlier this month. Not only that, I am also a sitting member on the Committees of Conference that just agreed on final language to opt-out of the individual mandate provision in Obamacare and to set-up an oversight committee to make sure no government agent is enforcing the law within New Hampshire until a final

⁸⁹ Email, June 14, 2011.

decision is made on its constitutionality. I'd say that if nothing else, my story indicates that you really can stand up and change the world, all it takes is a lot of time, a lot of effort and a very, very thick skin. I look forward to continuing these efforts into next year and a second term. The Republic needs more hard-working people willing to stand up and make sure we keep it, just like Ben Franklin said.”⁹⁰

Manuse’s autobiography raises several interesting points of comparison. First, Manuse’s story is one of a political awakening or epiphany – after reading several core texts, he became interested in government. Similarly, as the next chapter details, Tea Partiers of all stripes hold in common a canon of work on limited government, libertarian economic theory, and dystopian fiction. Second, is his use of the phrase “Constitutional Republic,” a term common in the writings of the John Birch Society and controversial historian Cleon Skousen. Similar language also appears on the web site and documents of the Natural Rights Council. Lastly, Manuse’s congratulatory tone of his early work in office is less evidence of an inflated ego than it is a sense that what he is doing in the legislature is extremely important to the fabric of American government. Though Manuse is the most ideologically committed to small government and holds views outside the norm – his advocacy of a regressive flat fee fax and banning of government unions, as examples – his spirit reflects a can-do attitude and respect for the legislative process.

After our email discussion, I wanted to schedule a face-to-face interview, but he again declined, writing, “My last e-mail to you included all the information I'm willing to offer.”⁹¹ I followed up with other legislators including Rep. Steve Winter, who met me for an interview in the Capitol cafeteria. Rep. Manuse happened to be at a nearby table, taking phone calls and working on his laptop. At the conclusion of the interview, Manuse came over

⁹⁰ Email, June 14, 2011.

⁹¹ Email, July 27, 2011.

to share some words with Winter concerning a piece of legislation and then introduced himself to me. Since he got a feel for the non-threatening nature of the conversation, he agreed to an interview on the spot.

Manuse began by explaining that he was working on a bill to curtail invasive practices by the Transportation Security Administration at airports, notably the full-body scan system, which he argued was an invasion of privacy. Similar to Burt's alliance with some Democrats over the right of citizens to film police officers, Manuse and liberal democrats are strange bedfellows in their opposition to intrusive airport security screening. He stressed that despite feelings for liberty, "I'm not Libertarian, I'm not an invader in the Republican Party. My House Republican Alliance 99 percent score⁹² is based on the Republican platform." He is also one of the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance's top 25 legislators with an A grade.⁹³

In describing his association with the Tea Party, Manuse said, "I have been affiliated with the Tea Party." But he criticized Andrew Hemingway, then-leader of the Republican Liberty Caucus⁹⁴, for claiming leadership over the Tea Party movement as well. "There is no one leader of the Tea Party," he explained. Manuse serves as the Executive Secretary for the Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire. Manuse attended four Tea Party rallies, including television host Glenn Beck's 9/12 rally in Washington, DC, where he recalled meeting several Democrats. He said that in comparison to the national Tea Party and other state-level movements, the New Hampshire Tea Party is more "liberty-oriented," more focused on individual rights.

⁹² "House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011."

⁹³ "2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate."

⁹⁴ At the time of the interview, Andrew Hemingway served as Chairman, see Republican Liberty Caucus, "New Hampshire Republican Liberty Caucus Endorses 61 candidates," July 24, 2010 <http://www.rlc.org/2010/07/14/rlcnh-endorsements-2010/>. Carolyn McKinney now fills that position, with Rep. Andrew Manuse serving as the Executive Secretary, see Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire, "Leadership," <http://rlcnh.org/about/leadership/>.

Manuse gave lengthy remarks, only sparingly interrupted by questions or comments, but he also seemed ready to engage me in a political debate on issues of the day. His comments on the economy, taxation, the welfare state, and his distaste for Abraham Lincoln appear in the later chapters. Though he despises Bush, Obama, and Lincoln, Manuse admires Grover Cleveland as “the last good president.”

Kyle Tasker

Rep. Kyle Tasker and I did not meet for an interview, but he responded to my email with his story about getting interested and getting elected. A freshman, he represents Candia, Deerfield, Northwood, and Nottingham. He received an A grade and status as a top 25 legislator from the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance⁹⁵ and a 98 percent rating from the House Republican Alliance.⁹⁶ The Republican Liberty Caucus endorsed Tasker in his primary run.⁹⁷

The entirety of his email response is included here:

“I am a native of New Hampshire and embraced many of the principles of the free state project before there was one. I welcome them with open arms. The New Hampshire Liberty Alliance was founded about 8 years ago and is the mouthpiece of the freestate movement in the state house and it was their fine work letting people know about liberty or anti-liberty oriented bills working their way through the legislature that got me going to the Legislative Office Building(LOB) to testify or sit in on committees. I now sit on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, the same committee I would sit in on in my late teens and early 20's. It was

⁹⁵ “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate.”

⁹⁶ “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011.”

⁹⁷ Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire “Endorsed Winners” November 2011
<http://assets.manuse.com/pdf/EndorsedGenElecWinners.pdf>

their efforts that persuaded me to write my representatives, one of whom was impressed with my conviction and recruited and successfully ran with me last year. My grandfather was a libertarian, as am I and his knowledge of the constitution and its importance was instilled in me from a young age. He was always active politically and courted Governors and Senators from his trailer on Route 4. It was always humorous to see governors showing up at a tiny trailer to try to win his favor or thank him for a contribution.

My youthful rebellion lead me to register as a Democrat even though I never really identified with any of their principles. I try to explain to my Republican colleagues that if they told the youth of today that Republican stands for smaller government, financial conservatism and personal freedom they would look at you as if you had three heads. To people of my age group (I'm 26) Republican stands for George Bush, war mongering, excessive spending and blood for oil. This needs to change and we need to start living up to our republican ideals not just repeating them over and over until we believe them. I am working tirelessly on my committee and in the state house to at the very least decriminalize possession of marijuana, the bill we submitted this year is 1 oz or less. We need to embrace personal freedom and permitless concealed carry of firearms.”⁹⁸

Steve Winter

“You give up your principles, I'll give up mine.”⁹⁹

Rep. Steve Winter is no stranger to Granite State politics – he was the 1994 Libertarian Party nominee for governor of New Hampshire. A radio show on WBZ Boston with host Gene Burns first sparked Winter's interest in politics. He said that Burns “made more sense

⁹⁸ Email, August 1, 2011.

⁹⁹ On the ability of legislators from different sides of the aisle to compromise. Steve Winter interview, August 4, 2011.

than anybody I ever heard” with his message of personal responsibility. Over the course of his life, Winter weaved in party registration from the Democratic party, to the GOP, to the Libertarian party, and back to the Republican party. In the early 90s, he attended a discussion forum the Libertarian party hosted and gradually became more involved, rising to the level of state party treasurer by 1994.

When he won the primary to be the party’s gubernatorial nominee, his goal was to garner 3 percent of the popular vote against Democrat Wayne King and incumbent Republican Steve Merrill. Winter described debates against his opponents by saying, “I could talk about the things they didn’t want to talk about because they were part of the problem” and claimed, “radio shows said I was winning all the debates.” Winter finished with 4.4 percent of the vote and Merrill won reelection with over 70 percent of the vote.¹⁰⁰ He said of the election, “I didn’t plan on winning – I couldn’t live on governor’s pay anyway I’d make more as a pilot.” Winter served as a pilot in the Navy from 1962 to 1967 and served in the Navy Reserve until 1986, attaining the rank of Commander. After leaving active service, he was a pilot for American Airlines and served as Secretary and Treasurer of the Allied Pilots Association, the national pilots union, from 1967 to 1998.

Winter is versed in parliamentary procedure – since 1998 he has served as the Vice President of New Hampshire’s chapter of the National Association of Parliamentarians. With sufficient name recognition from his prior gubernatorial run, Winter switched back to the Republican party and ran for a House seat in 2000 on a platform that challenged the Claremont decision. After redistricting in 2001, Winter lost his reelection bid, but with his political experience and knowledge of parliamentary procedure, the state Senate elected him

¹⁰⁰ New Hampshire Department of State, "Governor," State of New Hampshire Manual for the General Court 1995 No. 54.

clerk. He successfully sought reelection in 2010 and now represents Newbury and Sutton. Describing his changing political affiliation, he said, “I’m not a libertarian, I’m a constitutionalist,” a position that the next chapter will explore. Winter has a B+ rating from the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance¹⁰¹ and a 96 percent rating from the House Republican Alliance.¹⁰²

Despite his association with multiple facets of New Hampshire party politics, Winter has never been to a Tea Party rally or contributed money to the movement. “I don’t say I’m a member of the Tea Party or the Free State movement,” he said. Despite his lack of active involvement, he does feel a shared ideological connection, saying, “There is very little that they espouse that I don’t agree with,” particularly on the broad strokes of smaller government, less intrusion into private life, and an ethic of self-responsibility. Nothing the Tea Party affiliation of some New Hampshire representatives, Winter said the Tea Party movement has had a “very positive influence in the Republican caucus – it has given them an energy and spine.” Reflecting on Tea Party temperament, he said, “Yes they’re angry, but it doesn’t go beyond the general public.” This statement sheds light on one of the chief distinctions between Tea Party voters and legislators who affiliate with the Tea Party – the electorate is emotional, the elected are ideological.

Though the pulled quotation from Winter above demonstrates a level of ideological commitment to conservative principles, he noted that there is some common ground across the aisle and an amiable atmosphere working to solve problems at the committee level. Winter is a member of the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance and Republican House Alliance

¹⁰¹ “2011 Liberty Rating for the New Hampshire House and Senate.”

¹⁰² “House Republican Alliance Scorecard, July 5, 2011.”

but criticized the notion that caucusing detracts from governance, saying “we all have special interests.”

The Rest

After seeking out some specific members of the House and sending a blanket email to the House and Senate with a project description and request for assistance, the most telling response was a lack of a response. This paper’s greatest limitation is the limited number of legislators I interviewed – it is extremely difficult to draw broad conclusions concerning a chamber of large as New Hampshire’s with only a handful of conversations. Since the process is one of self-selection, it also parallels the Tea Party’s self-selection, as “members” are members to the extent to which they agree with the message or participate in the movement. Some expressed interest in meeting for an interview initially but fell out of contact with me despite repeated efforts, such as Rep. Dan Itse.

That most ignored my request in general, and several with strong Tea Party ties denied my request on several occasions, says something about the skepticism Tea Partiers expect from the media. Some asked for additional clarification or details about my background, noting that the press can get it wrong or have a hidden agenda. Manuse was extremely hesitant to speak with me, perhaps fearing a revelation of Republican campaign and fundraising secrets. Rep. Susan DeLemus was one legislator with whom I was particularly interested in speaking, as she is a conservative freshman representative and her husband, Jerry, leads the Rochester 9/12 project. Yet the DeLemuses did not return my emails or phone calls.

Democrats in the House responded to my email with varying levels of enthusiasm, though I asked for Republican volunteers only. Rep. Phil Ginsburg wrote, “I am a Democrat

and therefore not eligible to participate in your study, but I want to take this opportunity to say that I believe the Tea Party is both a destructive force in our politics and a fleeting phenomenon. I hope you don't plan to invest a disproportionate amount of your time in it.”¹⁰³

Rep. Cynthia Chase, a freshman, responded by asking, “Would it be too much to ask a senior on college to find a way to contact only the Republicans?”¹⁰⁴ Perhaps she thought I was approaching the project in an overtly pro-Republican capacity, for she concluded, “Then you would not bother people like me who think the Tea Party and the Free Staters represent the biggest threat to our country since the John Birch Society.”

Rep. John Cloutier was another Democrat who responded indicating his party affiliation. He also noted in his email that there are 108 Democrats in the General Court in total, compared with 318 Republicans (and 3 vacancies).¹⁰⁵

I also attempted the blanket email with the Senate, with only two responses. One was from Sen. Lou D’Allesandro, a Democrat who wished me luck on the project.¹⁰⁶ The other was from an aide to Republican Sen. David Boutin, who was undergoing surgery at the time and thus unable to meet.¹⁰⁷

Also worth mention is that not a single female member of the General Court responded in the affirmative to my interview request. While this certainly limits the ability of the paper to speak for the entirety of the General Court, beyond volition and compulsion there are no ways to guarantee the inclusion of women in the research.

¹⁰³ Phil Ginsburg, email, August 1, 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Cynthia Chase, email, August 1, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ John Cloutier, email, August 2, 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Lou D’Allesandro, email, August 1, 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Debra Martone, email, August 1, 2011.

Initial Conclusions

Based on the interviews and email responses of these legislators, there is certainly a range from moderate Republicans to conservative Republicans. Without a political ideology test, it is difficult to measure with accuracy the degree of conservatism of a particular legislator, but the interviews shed enough light that one can estimate. Christensen is the most moderate, explicitly labeling himself as such and taking on the environment as a pet cause – not an issue concern one traditionally associates with the conservative wing of the Republican Party. Boehm is also moderate, though he agrees in principle with the Tea Party and has some choice quotations about federal overreach, he has genuine, practical concerns with education guided and reinforced by his affection for his grandchildren. Winter is more conservative than these two, but his past association with the Libertarian party and long experience in New Hampshire politics make him characteristically different from the remaining legislators, and he explicitly states that he does not claim affiliation with the Tea Party despite overlapping positions.

Bowers, Burt, and Manuse have much in common – their names appear together near the top of legislative scorecards, they all claim strong affiliation with the Tea Party, having attended rallies before, and they are all freshman. Burt's statements most closely mirror those of Tea Party voters in their perceptual opinions about the direction of the country and fear for its future. Manuse and Bowers, by contrast, are ideological conservatives. Manuse is by far the most extreme of those I interviewed, favoring a regressive flat fee tax, unique opinions on the most important president, even opposition to airport screening, making him a consistent libertarian. He also had some of the strongest condemnatory words for President Obama and his policies. Tasker is somewhere between Winter and Manuse, Bowers, and Burt – he is a

freshman who supports marijuana decriminalization and is a self-styled libertarian, but he is characteristically different from the experienced Winter. All of the legislators I spoke with are fiscal conservatives, through and through. The remaining chapters investigate their degree of fiscal conservatism and their varying Constitutional and social views.

On a strictly anecdotal basis, then, the freshmen representatives who affiliate with the Tea Party are the most partisan and consistently conservative in their views. They are less willing to compromise than Christensen or Boehm, representatives with long tenures in the House. They espouse certain political views, such as a laxer drug policy, that would most likely *upset* older, conservative voters who make up the majority of Tea Partiers. They may appeal to these voters on the perceptual, emotional levels – criticism of Obama, healthcare, and the federal government, lower taxes and spending – but once in office, they rattle off extremely unpopular agenda items such as, in the case of Manuse, complete dismantlement of the welfare state.

Despite the extremity of some of these positions, it would be unfair to toss aside these legislators as wholly partisan and uncompromising. While they may stake out these positions rhetorically, once in office they face the reality of having to work with Democrats and more moderate Republicans to pass legislation and do the day-to-day work that is governance. Manuse found Democratic allies in airport security issues. Tasker works with Free Staters, libertarians, and liberal democrats for decriminalization of marijuana. Christensen works with moderates of both parties on changing technocratic details of the language of environmental regulation, rather than partisan sparring. As later chapters demonstrate, most have a respect for the social safety net, but the emphasis is on protecting deserving recipients from undeserving recipients.

Above all, these legislators express a sense of pride in their service in New Hampshire. The large size of the General Court and small population make close relationships with constituents possible. Even when they seek to dismantle areas of government, they have a profound sense of respect for the Constitution, the Founding, and eternal tenets of the American creed – in contrast to their depiction as “Jacobins.” They have low-key, unprofessional vibes about them, even when their tenure in office continues on multiple terms. These may all be attributes unique to New Hampshire legislators in general, or they may be amplified by their conservative politics, or inexperience and ease of election may sharpen them still. Whatever the cause, it is clear that these legislators are not the nation-destroying rogues some of their Democratic colleagues make them out to be.

Chapter 2: The Tea Party's View of History and Philosophy

Having introduced the New Hampshire legislators, this chapter will examine the Tea Party's philosophical influences and its view of itself in history. Though commentary notes the Tea Party's focus on economic issues, this common analysis overlooks the lingering importance of social and religious issues in not only drawing members to activism within its ranks, but also coloring the tenor of their advocacy. The Tea Party straddles the line between religious and strictly political justifications – while in many cases Partiers assign Christianity a place of importance, more widespread than overt theological argumentation is a reverence for the Constitution and quasi-mythical Founding Fathers. The psychological Christian grounding of Tea Party activists influences their politics, but their worship is a civic religion appealing to a wider audience of Americans. This paper argues that a root of Tea Party anger and the movement's divergences with the public on perceptual issues more broadly stems from a closer association between faith and the founding.

What follows is an investigation of the distinct philosophical views that bind Tea Partiers and often take on religious characteristics. Many adherents have their own conversion stories, moments when they “woke up” from being liberal or apolitical to realize the nation strayed from founding principles. Like a faith, the American civic religion has its own prophets and foundational texts available for study and interpretation, most notably the Constitution. While these characteristics are distinct from the metaphysical beliefs of most Americans, they are not new. Tea Partiers take Constitution worship to a new level, but also have loose ties to the controversial John Birch Society. The combination of longstanding religious conservative ideas with enthusiasm and technological organization under a foreboding economic atmosphere makes the Tea Party moment novel.

Conversion Stories and Foundational Texts

“When you read these guys, it’s alive. It’s like, you know, reading the scriptures. It’s like reading the Bible. It is alive today. And it only comes alive when you need it.” – Glenn Beck¹⁰⁸

In his capacity as an unofficial spokesperson and important player in the Tea Party movement, Glenn Beck in this quotation makes a religious claim about political documents. For Beck, who struggled with drug addiction and later converted to the Mormon faith,¹⁰⁹ the analogy of a similar conversion process from apathetic citizen to organized Tea Party patriot is fitting. Tea Party representatives in New Hampshire have their own stories. Like the Bible and a catechism of religious thinkers, the Constitution and several philosophical works feature prominently in the education of Tea Partiers.¹¹⁰

New Hampshire Rep. Andrew Manuse, who strongly identifies with the Tea Party and is one of the chamber’s most conservative members, explained how he came to be interested in politics after reading dystopian fiction.¹¹¹ As religious converts find inspiration or direction in reading that church’s foundational documents, Manuse found grounding for his political beliefs in Rand’s novels. Manuse’s use of the term “Constitutional Republic” is also of interest because the John Birch Society frequently invokes the phrase in the context of a restorative project. The John Birch Society’s declaration of principles states, “We believe that a constitutional republic, such as our founding fathers gave us, is probably the best of all forms of government. We believe that a democracy, which they tried hard to obviate, and into which the liberals have been trying for fifty years to convert our republic, is one of the

¹⁰⁸ Quoted by Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010) 157

¹⁰⁹ John Avlon, “Glenn Beck’s Dark Past,” *The Daily Beast*, January 22, 2010
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/01/22/the-making-of-glenn-beck.html>

¹¹⁰ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 51. “Many Tea Party members are Protestant evangelical Christians who have transferred the skills and approaches of Bible study directly to the Constitution.”

¹¹¹ Chapter 1

worst of all forms of government.”¹¹² Manuse also invokes the phrases “restore” and “get back to these ideals,” the typical rhetoric that the Tea Party represents an Arcadian America before its fall from grace.

Tea Party people have a common reading list. *New York Times* reporter Kate Zernike gives a description of the texts for one Tea Party activist: “The back of Grimes’s teal Mercury Grand Marquis was loaded with the literature of the movement. There was Glenn Beck’s bestselling *Common Sense* and *Arguing with Idiots*, Bastiat’s¹¹³ *The Law, The Federalist Papers, Liberty and Tyranny* by the conservative radio host Mark Levin, *The 5000 Year Leap*, and *a Patriot’s History of the United States*.”¹¹⁴

While the conversion stories and common texts give the movement a certain religious zeal, scholars also use religious language when noting the level of Tea Party devotion to the Constitution and Founders. Matthew Cooper and Rebecca Kaplan write, “While the Tea Party worships the entire Constitution, its members seem to genuflect before some parts more than others [...]”¹¹⁵ This analysis falls squarely in line with Beck’s statement on the immanent, spiritual nature of the Constitution, Declaration, and philosophical works.

The historical narrative, though important for Tea Party representatives, is also sometimes misinterpreted. Rep. Ralph Boehm, who took office before the Tea Party’s rise, said he identifies positively with the movement and espouses similar positions. “The Tea

¹¹² “Principles of the John Birch Society, 1962” in *Debating the 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives*, eds. Michael Flamm and David Steigerwald (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). One should read the phrase “Constitutional republic” and its association with the John Birch Society with a grain of salt: after all, the phrase is frequently used by scholars and think tanks in describing the American polity. As this chapter explores, some Tea Party connections with the John Birch Society go beyond a merely shared spirituality.

¹¹³ Claude Frederic Bastiat, 1801-1850.

¹¹⁴ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 78

¹¹⁵ Matthew Cooper and Rebecca Kaplan, “The Tea Party’s Constitutional Vision,” *National Journal*, February 17, 2011 http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/ps/i.do?action=interpret&id=GALE%7CA264032386&v=2.1&u=mmln_m_bostcoll&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w&authCount=1

Party is like the Federalists 200 years ago – ‘how big should the federal government be?’” he explained. “I’ve always believed in the ninth and tenth amendments,”¹¹⁶ he said, echoing Tea Party rhetoric that expresses reverence for those amendments.

The comparison to the Federalists is problematic, for the party of Alexander Hamilton pushed the adoption of the Constitution and the creation of a strong, centralized federal government. It was the Anti-Federalists who more closely resembled today’s populist stirrings, with their advocacy of states’ rights and a document of guaranteed freedoms. The Tea Party is more Shays’ Rebellion than Constitutional Convention, a point Rasmussen makes.¹¹⁷ Political science professor David Shehat explains that since the Constitution sought to strengthen the power of the federal government from the weak authority it held under the Articles of Confederation, the Tea Party’s opposition to federal control puts them in the same camp as Anti-Federalists. “Even though Tea Partiers appeal to the Constitution to support their position, they often sound more like Antifederalist opponents of the Constitution than the Constitution’s supporters. This is because the original vision of the Constitution did not seek to keep the national government small and in its place, as the Tea Partiers claim,” he writes.¹¹⁸

One of the most cited sound bites from both ordinary Tea Party voters and elected officials alike is the quest to “take back the country.” The United States was founded on a set of Judeo-Christian, individualistic principles embedded and implied within the Constitution, the story goes, but the evolution of the government’s power to infringe on once-protected

¹¹⁶ Boehm interview.

¹¹⁷ Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad As Hell*, 41.

¹¹⁸ David Shehat, “Would today’s Tea Party have opposed the US Constitution?” *Christian Science Monitor* February 10, 2011 [http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2011/0210/Would-today-s-tea-party-have-opposed-the-US-Constitution/\(page\)/2](http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2011/0210/Would-today-s-tea-party-have-opposed-the-US-Constitution/(page)/2).

areas of personal life represents a fall from grace. The solution is a return to the country's founding moment and its purer principles of freedom. Harvard lecturer and social movements scholar Tim McCarthy, though he expressed skepticism at labeling the Tea Party an authentic social movement, nevertheless said, "social movements have origin myths – the Tea Party's is the Founding."¹¹⁹ He explained that origin myths have the power to help organizers identify with others and provide justification for their beliefs. An appeal to the Founding Fathers, revered in American political culture, gives Partiers ethos in staking out political positions. McCarthy also expressed frustration with Rep. Michele Bachmann's inaccurate statements on the Founders and saw difficulty in reconciling slavery with the Founding.

The focus is not only on bringing the country back to founding principles, but also back to the values society held when activists were children: textbook traditional conservatism. John Burt, a freshman member of New Hampshire's House and staunch Tea Party supporter, explained his inspiration to seek elected office. "I worried that my grandkids wouldn't live in the same America I did," he said. "When I grew up there was no borrowing, we had Reagan."¹²⁰

The Presidency of Ronald Reagan is another important foundational moment for Tea Party members, even though it took place 200 years after the founding.¹²¹ During Reagan's term, federal debt as a percentage of GDP increased to 53.1% from 32.5%.¹²² Less important than the historical record is the way representatives *felt* about government in the 1980s:

¹¹⁹ McCarthy interview. Skocpol also writes, "[...] using references to the 'true meaning' of the Constitution in their struggle to shape the nation's future – rather than actually trying to return to any given moment in America's past. They are doing what every political endeavor does: using history as a source of inspiration and social identity," 50. This is in contrast to Lepore who assumes that Tea Partiers want a literal return to 1789.

¹²⁰ Burt interview

¹²¹ Rhodes Cook, "The Tea Party," in *Who Got in the Booth? A Look Back at the 2010 Elections*, ed. Larry Sabato, (Boston: Longman, 2011) 29.

¹²² CBO Historical Budget Page and Whitehouse FY 2012 Budget - Table 7.1 Federal Debt at the End of Year PDF, Excel, Senate.gov.

several cite it as less intrusive, with lower taxes, lower spending, and generally more trustworthy than today. The positive moods about the economy, government, and culture may be linked to periods of economic growth in the 1980s (though there were extended periods of recession) in comparison to the Great Recession today, linked to more negative views. This paper will later take up the issue of how economic growth influences temperament and political views in Chapter 3.

Constitution

The Constitution represents the most sacred foundational text for the Tea Party and as such requires a strict reading of the document's original intent rather than interpretative justifications based on changing social structures. As Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) writes, "Should we give up the First Amendment because times have changed? How about the rest of the Bill of Rights? It's hypocritical and childish to dismiss certain founding principles simply because a convenient rationale is needed to justify foolish policies today. The principles enshrined in the Constitution do not change."¹²³ This view ignores the important ways the Constitution's principles have changed for the better – inclusion of minorities and women, a lowered voting age, and direct election of Senators. The same rationale justifies the question "Should we give up the three-fifths compromise because times have changed?"

New Hampshire legislators who even loosely associate with the Tea Party claim agreement with the Constitution. Rep. Manuse said, "The Constitution is king, law of the land. That's not your Obama constitutional scholar interpretation but the Constitution has become how we can twist these words to mean what we want them to."¹²⁴ Rep. Burt said, "I

¹²³ Ron Paul, *Revolution: A Manifesto* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2008) 10

¹²⁴ Manuse interview

believe in the Constitutional rights everyone deserves.”¹²⁵ Rep. Steve Winters, who formerly ran as the Libertarian Party’s candidate for New Hampshire governor in 1984, drew a distinction between his old party and the political beliefs he espouses. “It’s about going back to the Constitution. I’m not a Libertarian, I’m a Constitutionalist.”¹²⁶ Tea Party groups in New Hampshire are also concerned with the Constitution.¹²⁷

What’s not clear is what in the Constitution exactly needs going back to, or what the rights are that “everyone deserves.” Is it the Bill of Rights, whose applicability to the fifty states is a relatively recent facet of jurisprudence? Is it a return to the original Constitution, free from amendments Tea Partiers find unsavory, such as the federal income tax? Is it merely the expansion of federal powers under the Commerce Clause that needs erasing? As Skocpol writes, “Tea Partiers stretch the limits of the Constitution” and “use it selectively” to fit their own purposes.¹²⁸

Amendments

Even legal scholars serving as Tea Party apologists offer unsatisfactory answers. Elizabeth Price Foley, a law professor at Florida International University, writes in a recent book that Tea Party people seek to “restore the Constitution, not remake it.”¹²⁹ She advances several contradictory arguments simultaneously. First, she explains how restoring the Constitution does not mean a return to slavery, since the amendment process means that the Constitution changed. She also goes on to explain how the Tea Party is lobbying for a

¹²⁵ Burt interview

¹²⁶ Winters interview

¹²⁷ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 49. They write, “And when New Hampshire Tea Party leader Jerry DeLemus arrived to give a talk in neighboring Maine, he greeted one of the two women who lead the York County Constitutionals with a warm hug and a special gift: a pocket Constitution autographed by Michele Bachmann [...]”

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 50.

¹²⁹ Foley, *Three Principles*, 208-209.

Constitutional amendment to balance the budget, for example, which would change the substance of the Constitution but not the process by which it changes.¹³⁰ There is discussion of repealing the 14th amendment's guarantee of birthright citizenship that hides under a thin veneer of originalism.¹³¹ Thus, the process of restoration she advances does away with some amendments but keeps others. New Hampshire Tea Party leader Jerry DeLemus favors restricting the amendments to just the Bill of Rights, dispensing with those trivial ones that ended slavery.¹³²

Foley also writes of the Tea Party's desires to repeal the Sixteenth and Seventeenth amendments¹³³ Repeal of the provision that requires the direct popular election of Senators is particularly puzzling, given her desire to return to the 10th Amendment and its reservation of freedoms to the people. It is even more head-scratching when Foley makes a long argument explaining that a recent food safety law was unconstitutional because it violated the Origination Clause, "designed to give populous states more influence over taxation [...] and ensuring again that tax measures enjoyed broad popular support."¹³⁴ Obviously, the selection of Senators by state legislatures, rather than by the voters themselves, would decrease the likelihood that tax measures would have broad popular support.

Amendments are a point of contention for Tea Partiers, despite their worship of the Constitution. Many lobby for the repeal of the 16th Amendment, which established the federal income tax, citing it as the root cause of the expansion of federal power. Some prominent politicians, including Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) have called for partial or full repeal

¹³⁰ Ibid. 209-210.

¹³¹ Ibid. 144-152.

¹³² Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 50.

¹³³ Foley, *Three Principles*, 207.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 204.

of the 14th amendment for its guarantee of citizenship to those born within the United States more narrowly and its expansion of federal power more generally. The 17th amendment is another favorite target, as some make the case for its repeal as a way to give states more control over federal Senators. This is part of the contradictory nature of Tea Party demands that the Constitution be “restored”: how can the movement, on the one hand, accept the validity of the post-Civil War amendments, which were not present at the Founding, and on the other, continue to worship the Founding as a divine, perfect moment perverted by some subsequent amendments that allow for the income tax or direct election of senators?

Indeed, the Bill of Rights was not included in the first draft of the Constitution, rather added later after ratification to assuage concerns among the populist, anti-federalist wings of state legislatures. Moreover, the call for repeal of the 14th amendment’s guarantee of birthright citizenship, for example, begs the racial question. Bracketing questions of how racial resentment against Latino immigrants may inform the opposition to birthright citizenship, opposition to some portions of the 14th amendment on the policy provisions alone runs the risk of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. How do Tea Partiers justify the 14th amendment’s important equal protection and due process clauses as obviously being in the original spirit of the Constitution but its provision for birthright citizenship as somehow contrary to that same spirit?

New Hampshire legislators also introduce arguments about amendments. Rep. Ralph Boehm proclaimed himself not just a Constitutionalist regarding the federal Constitution, but also the New Hampshire state Constitution. Using the recent Affordable Care Act as an example, he said, “Socialized medicine is not working anywhere. Look at England, Canada.

Where does it say that in [the US] Constitution? The constitution is not a living document; if you want benefits you have to amend it.”¹³⁵

Constitutional Influences

The National Center for Constitutional Studies is one influence on Tea Party’s particular reading of the Constitution¹³⁶, among many, but its controversial stances deserve examination. Cleon Skousen founded the Center after writing a derided textbook, *The Making of America*, which argues that the Constitution and Founding more generally were literal miracles. The Founders studied the Bible and intended for the new nation to follow a Christian path, he explains¹³⁷. Skousen’s most notable work, *The Five Thousand Year Leap*, is highly touted by Glenn Beck.¹³⁸

The Center provides training materials and workshops for those seeking to return to founding Constitutional principles. Kate Zernike gives a detailed account of one Center activist, Jared Taylor. Taylor instructs an Elkhart, Indiana 9/12 group on a seven-hour course titled after Skousen’s textbook, *The Making of America*. Among the course’s activities are learning the preamble to the Constitution entirely in sign language. The Center also provides pocket Constitutions, favorites among Tea Party members at rallies.

Scholars panned *The Making of America* not only on grounds of its extremely unlikely, warrantless theories of the founding, but also for its sometimes overtly racist views. Skousen makes an argument that the Founders “had discovered that the most substantive principles of representative government were those practiced by ancient Israel under the leadership of

¹³⁵ Boehm interview

¹³⁶ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, 51.

¹³⁷ Cleon Skousen, *The Making of America: The Substance and Meaning of the Constitution* (Washington: National Center for Constitutional Studies, 1985)

¹³⁸ Alexander Zaitchik, “Meet the Man Who Changed Glenn Beck’s Life,” *Salon*, September 16, 2009. http://www.salon.com/2009/09/16/beck_skousen/

Moses. Jefferson had also studied the institutes of government of the Anglo-Saxons and had found that they were almost identical to those of the Israelites.”¹³⁹ The evidence consists mainly of a quotation from Jefferson praising Anglo-Saxon property laws as a preferable alternative to the British system of taxation against the colonies. The line from the tribes of Israel through Anglo-Saxon kings to the Constitutional Convention is speculative and thin.

Skousen included a controversial essay¹⁴⁰ on the nature of slavery in his textbook. The book has an image of hands in chains with the caption, “In some ways, the economic system of slavery chained the slave owners almost as much as the slaves.”¹⁴¹ The essay, the work of Pulitzer-prize winning historian Fred Albert Shannon, argues, “the instructions of planters to overseers almost universally emphasized the care to be given to slaves, firmness without brutality, and justice unaccompanied by indulgence being emphasized.”¹⁴² The essay depicts slavery as a hardship for whites and uses racial slurs throughout. Just pages after the statements on slavery, Skousen’s textbook iterates a familiar list of Tea Party demands, among them to “pass the Balanced Budget Amendment” and to eliminate unconstitutional federal government agencies and Cabinet positions.¹⁴³

Jeffery Rosen, a professor at George Washington University’s school of law, finds much in common between Skousen and Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT), a leading advocate of the Tea Party’s constitutional originalism. Rosen is critical of Skousen’s views, writing, “A vocal supporter of the John Birch Society, Skousen argued that a dynastic cabal, including international bankers like the Rockefellers and J. P. Morgan, conspired to manipulate both

¹³⁹ Skousen, *Making of America*, 32.

¹⁴⁰ Katherine Bishop, “Bicentennial Panel in California Assailed Over ‘Racist’ Textbook,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1987. <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/02/16/us/bicentennial-panel-in-california-assailed-over-racist-textbook.html?src=pm>

¹⁴¹ Skousen, *Making of America*, 737.

¹⁴² Ibid. 733

¹⁴³ Ibid. 743

Communism and Fascism to promote a one-world government. Skousen's vision of the Constitution was no less extreme."¹⁴⁴ Skousen's Center conducted 200 seminars in 2010, according to Rosen, classes that advocate for repeal of wasteful Cabinet departments, states' rights, and the teaching of religious principles in public schools. Despite the more radical tendencies of Skousen and his Center's ongoing educational efforts, Rosen writes that more narrowly the Tea Party focus is on repealing statutes deemed unconstitutional, such as the healthcare law.

Zernike documents some of the examples in the Center's presentation, including the "communist" policies of the failed Jamestown settlement, George Mason's views of the enumeration of rights, and the original intent behind Medicare that states be the primary shapers of policy.¹⁴⁵ Zernike is critical of Tea Party views on the Constitution but explains how they may overemphasize the extent of racial biases. "To talk about states' rights in the way some Tea Partiers did was to pretend that the twentieth century and the latter half of the nineteenth century had never happened, that the country had not rejected this doctrine over and over. It was little wonder that people heard this echo of the slave era and decided that the movement had to be motivated by racism."¹⁴⁶

Constitutional Outreach

Skousen's Constitutional lessons also made their way into public schools. In response to the late Sen. Robert Byrd's legislation that requires any school receiving government funding to teach the Constitution on National Constitution Day, the Tea Party Patriots group started an adopt-a-school program whereby parents lobby schools to implement their particular

¹⁴⁴ Jeffrey Rosen, "Radical Constitutionalism," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2010.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/28/magazine/28FOB-idealab-t.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper&pagewanted=1

¹⁴⁵ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 75-77.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 72

Constitutional interpretation. “As part of the ‘adopt a school’ campaign, TPP and its members are advising school officials to rely on lesson plans, DVDs, and a package of other course materials created by the National Center for Constitutional Studies.”¹⁴⁷

Historian Jill Lepore explains the impact of Tea Party-pushed curricula changes in Texas:

“Thomas Aquinas was added to a list of thinkers who inspired the American Revolution; Thomas Jefferson (who once wrote about a “wall of separation between Church & State”) was removed. The United States, called, in the old curriculum, a ‘democratic society,’ was now to be referred to as a ‘constitutional republic.’ Biblical law was to be studied as an intellectual influence on the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution. Kids in Texas, who used to study Locke, Hobbes, and Montesquieu as thinkers whose ideas informed the nation’s founding, would now dispense with Hobbes, in favor of Moses.”¹⁴⁸

Constitutional Faith

For Lepore, the Tea Party’s view of history is revisionist, changing details to cater to narrow political ends rather than an objective portrayal of events. Biblical law as an influence on the Constitution mirrors Skousen’s teachings – his Constitutional textbook includes images of Moses displaying the Ten Commandments, a part of the theory that the tribes of Israel were the model for American democracy. Lepore also notes the distinctive phrase “constitutional republic” as one that crops up frequently, the same phrase Manuse and John Birch society members use, though to read too much into the mantra would be finding Tea Partiers guilty by association.

Jill Lepore’s work is an historical analysis of the Tea Party in which she interviews members around Boston and compares their statements on the Constitution and the American Revolution with the actual record. She brings out the complexities and nuanced details of Sam Adams, the Franklins, the original Tea Party, and the famous ride of Paul Revere. She also makes a compelling argument against an originalist interpretation of the Constitution,

¹⁴⁷ Stephanie Mencimer, “The Tea Party Wants to Teach Your Kids About the Constitution,” *Mother Jones*, May 12, 2011. <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/05/tea-party-constitution-week-skousen>

¹⁴⁸ Lepore, *Whites of Their Eyes*, 13.

reasoning that to go back in time to the Founding would be an acceptance of slavery (a time before the historic post-Civil War amendments ending slavery and guaranteeing equal protection, due process, etc.), an ignorance of the progress made for women, a time of great economic inequality, and a land of diminished capacity for warding off disease and the elements. She notes the distinction between religious rhetoric and religious views, terming the Tea Party's Constitutional fixation "historical fundamentalism." She writes:

"Historical fundamentalism is marked by the belief that a particular and quite narrowly defined past—"the founding"—is ageless and sacred and to be worshipped; that certain historical texts—"the founding documents"—are to be read in the same spirit with which religious fundamentalists read, for instance, the Ten Commandments; that the Founding Fathers were divinely inspired; that the academic study of history (whose standards of evidence and methods of analysis are based on skepticism) is a conspiracy and, furthermore, blasphemy; and that political arguments grounded in appeals to the founding documents, as sacred texts, and to the Founding Fathers, as prophets, are therefore incontrovertible."¹⁴⁹

Sanford Levinson's book, *Constitutional Faith*, documents a litany of instances in which religious fervor applies to the Constitution. "In a country as fragmented as the United States is — we don't have a national religion, a really shared ethnicity — the kinds of emotions that would be directed at organic nationalism are displaced onto the Constitution"¹⁵⁰ The religiosity of the Constitution is not a new phenomenon, then, or one unique to conservatives. The current level of devotion to its study and enthusiasm for its proper application by Tea Partiers *is* unique.

Foley criticizes the comparison between Bible study and Constitutional study, despite Beck and Tea Partiers making the point on their own. She writes, "The repeated association of Tea Partier's constitutional reverence with Bible study is no cute and innocent analogy, but a conscious, if implicit, condemnation of their insistence that we take the Constitution

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 16

¹⁵⁰ Sanford Levinson, Quoted in "The Tea Party's Religious Fervor," *NY Times* Nov. 5, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/06/us/politics/06religion.html>

seriously and literally.”¹⁵¹ The comparison though is still apt, for just as literal readers of the Bible face difficulty when discarding arcane lines from Leviticus on the one hand but insisting on the Bible’s prohibition of homosexuality on the other, so do Tea Partiers face problems of discarding the ugly history of slavery in the Constitution’s past on the one hand and restoration to its original ideals on the other. Tea Partiers take the Constitution seriously, but for their own ends. The amendment stipulating income tax was never supposed to be there, so they claim, but the ones ending slavery were of course intentional all along – this position is neither consistent nor is it particularly persuasive.

Rugged Individualism

Jay Bernstein, quoted at the beginning of the paper, has his own theory on the philosophy of the Tea Party. “The issue here is a central one in modern philosophy: is individual autonomy an irreducible metaphysical given or a social creation?” he asks.¹⁵² During periods of economic downturn, Tea Party adherents feel vulnerable as the myth of the American dream unravels. The hope that the country they grew up in will be a bit better for their children diminishes, with institutions taking the blame. The state then takes a larger role in response to the economy, bailing out banks, extending unemployment assistance, and all the rest, signs that the myth of rugged individualism no longer holds – Americans depend on the state for financial security.

Instead of criticizing the state of the economy, Bernstein argues, Tea Partiers blame the government for disrupting individualism, a contradiction in terms since it is only by that government support that their criticism is possible. He writes, “Since they repudiate the conditions of dependency that have made their and our lives possible, they can only imagine

¹⁵¹ Foley, *Three Principles*, 168

¹⁵² Bernstein, “The Very Angry Tea Party.”

freedom as a new beginning.”¹⁵³ This attempts to explain the feeling among Tea Partiers that there must be a return to a mythical Founding period, where individualism was still possible. Bernstein’s argument is interesting, but too philosophical to hold weight as strict social science.

Lincoln

Though Tea Party legislators cite the Founding Fathers or Gilded Age presidents as among their favorites, only one mentioned Lincoln. In listing leaders he admires, Rep. Manuse said, “Look at George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, or Samuel Adams to look at me.” He also mentioned Grover Cleveland as “the last good president.” But Rep. Manuse continued, “Not so much Lincoln. Lincoln destroyed our republic.”¹⁵⁴

These words are similar to a statement by Ron Paul, “Six hundred thousand Americans died in a senseless civil war.... [President Abraham Lincoln] did this just to enhance and get rid of the original intent of the republic.”¹⁵⁵ Paul also includes Thomas DiLorenzo’s critical Lincoln biography, *The Real Lincoln*, in a suggested reading list in his book, *The Revolution*.¹⁵⁶

When pressed to defend his position against Lincoln, Manuse expanded by questioning the necessity of the Civil War and defending the sovereignty of states to leave the Union if they choose. “The problem would have solved itself. I don’t think the Civil War was necessary – an amendment to the Constitution would have solved the problem,” he said. He went on to say that slavery “was evil but the underlying principle should be that states have

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Manuse interview

¹⁵⁵ Jason George, “Ron Paul takes on Repubs from Lincoln to Bush,” *The Swamp: Chicago Tribune’s Washington Bureau*, Dec. 23, 2007. Cites a December 23 interview on *Meet the Press*. http://www.swamppolitics.com/news/politics/blog/2007/12/ron_paul_takes_on_repubs_from.html

¹⁵⁶ Paul, *Revolution*, 188.

the right to pursue their own agenda” and that the Civil War “turned a voluntary republic into an involuntary association.”¹⁵⁷

Ken Kersch explores the centrality of Lincoln to what he calls Declarationism, an interpretation in the style of original intent that also includes the Declaration of Independence as proof positive of a religious, natural law founding. By criticizing Lincoln as a closet racist and glorifying Confederate leader Jefferson Davis, religious conservatives co-opt the rhetoric of racial progress not only for political gain, but as part of a broader justification for the redeeming nature of religious principles. The starting point for Kersch’s examination is the strange juxtaposition of Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, on the anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream Speech,” calling for limited government and a return to Founding ideals. By minimizing the role of Lincoln on the one hand, and praising the end of slavery as divine ordinance on the other, the Tea Party and religious conservatives can claim a dual feat of giving credence to natural law while simultaneously denying the flaws of the Founders in allowing for such an institution to exist.¹⁵⁸

Conclusions

While the reverence for the Founding Fathers and the Constitution is neither new nor peculiar to the Tea Party, the level of devotion is unique. Tea Partiers and New Hampshire legislators all make claims about Constitutionality and limiting government interference in private affairs. Tea Partiers especially express religiosity over the Founding as a mythical moment, paralleling the study of scripture.

¹⁵⁷ Manuse interview

¹⁵⁸ Kenneth Kersch, “Beyond Originalism: Conservative Declarationism and Constitutional Redemption,” *Maryland Law Review* 71 (2011): 216.

This agreement on broad, perceptual strokes about the Constitution's importance and the wisdom of the ancients becomes less clear when actual specifics arise. When presented with distasteful laws perceived to be Constitutionally dubious, such as the Affordable Care Act, Tea Partiers praise the process of amending the Constitution as a preferable alternative. But what about unsavory amendments such as the 14th amendment's birthright citizenship guarantee? While they refrain from exploring outright the possibility that Constitutional amendments can be unconstitutional, there is a definite view that these amendments run contrary to the Founders' spirit.

While a later chapter explores racism in the Tea Party, some of the arguments introduced concerning the Constitution beg the racial question. When Tea Partiers question the 14th amendment's guarantee of birthright citizenship, or argue that the Founding, with its allowance of slavery, is preferable to the nation's state in 2012, how can one not ask these questions? Careful not to read too much into loose association, this chapter also introduced Tea Party ties with Cleon Skousen and the John Birch society, figures noted for racism. As Chapter 5 argues, Tea Partiers are not overt racists. Still, as Zernike puts it, it is hard not to face racial criticisms when the cry for states' rights sounds so similar to the segregationist South (or when a New Hampshire legislator says Lincoln destroyed the constitutional republic).

Chapter 3: Economic and Fiscal Views

This chapter investigates Tea Party views on the economy, taxation, and spending. The conventional wisdom on the Tea Party is that the movement prioritizes economic issues over social ones, concerns that went unaddressed during the Bush years. While there may be newfound emphasis on fiscal conservatism, the actual policy positions are not new. Nor are they as controversial as the media portrays. While again the conventional wisdom is that Tea Partiers are diametrically opposed to all taxes and government spending, analysis of public opinion polling reveals that a majority of those identifying with the movement are more moderate on specific policy proposals than one may expect. There are also differences between Tea Party Republicans and Republicans who do not identify with the Tea Party, but given the movement's commitment to the GOP, the divergences are not great.

New Hampshire state legislators are fiscal conservatives through and through, but most do not hold views favoring wholesale erosion of a governmental role in the economy. Once in office, freshman legislators immerse themselves in the minutiae of spending and taxation policy, rather than stick to an uncompromising ideological position against all spending and taxes. But there are real differences: voters are emotional, legislators are ideological. Tea Party sympathizers view welfare as a contest between deserving and undeserving recipients, a distinction informed by sensitivities about the direction of the nation. Most New Hampshire legislators do not share these social fears and are more likely to be ideologically rigid and extreme on economic issues. Because issues of federal spending, the debt and deficit, taxation, and social welfare are intimately connected and frequently attacked as a monolith, this chapter will group them together for the sake of ease of analysis, while also striving to make distinctions when necessary.

Rhetoric and Commonly Articulated Views

“Get your government hands off my Medicare.”¹⁵⁹

While at first glance the above quotation seems to discredit Tea Party activists, examination of scholarship points to a particular view of the role of government that makes such a statement more understandable. There is broad agreement among Tea Party supporters, many of whom are retired, on spending for Social Security and Medicare. A distinction is between federal spending for the “deserving” and spending for the “undeserving.” As Skocpol and Williamson explain, “Government programs are not intrinsically objectionable in the minds of Tea Party activists, and certainly not when they go to help them. Rather, government spending is seen as corrupted by creating benefits for people who do not contribute, who take handouts at the expense of hard-working Americans.”¹⁶⁰ Tea Partiers see themselves as hard-working, contributing members of society who have paid their dues and played by the rules. According to this line of thought, members of society who did not play by the rules do not deserve the same benefits afforded to those who did. Such a criticism cuts against both high-income bankers whose institutions received bailouts and to low-income illegal immigrants and the unemployed who rely on welfare.

Taxation and spending are intimately linked with the high level of federal debt. Tea Partiers express frustration that though they balance their budget as a family and live within their means, the government does not have to meet the same basic responsibility.¹⁶¹ There is

¹⁵⁹ Zernike, citing town hall meetings in South Carolina, *Boiling Mad*, 135.

¹⁶⁰ Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol and John Coggins, “The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism,” *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9 No. 1 (2011): 33.

¹⁶¹ Amelia Scott, “It’s Not the Deficit, Stupid,” *Huffington Post*, August 1, 2011 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amelia-scott/deficit-metaphor_b_913922.html. She writes, “I have to balance my budget, why shouldn’t the federal government? My family shouldn’t carry debt, why should the Fed? I can’t

also the familiar concern that high spending now will mean higher taxes and a lower quality of life for children and grandchildren, a reflection of the common aspiration of the American Dream to make the nation more prosperous for one's children.

Critics point to the high spending eras of the Bush years as evidence that there is not a genuine concern for the federal debt.¹⁶² If so, the same activists wearing tri-corner hats would also have protested the deficit spending for Medicare Part D, tax cuts, and two wars. Some Tea Party activists do express frustration with the Bush years,¹⁶³ and a more libertarian wing of the Republican Party can make a credible case for having opposed Bush spending policies. This poses an issue: are the positions against high government spending and a high debt level longstanding or did they only recently come into view? The answer may lie with the unique combination of a struggling economy, increasing levels of immigration, the first black president, and other indirect, tangential concerns that inform resentment at spending and debt.

Some of the philosophies undergirding opposition to the size of government include the Austrian School of Economics, a tradition that existed long before the Tea Party movement but one that had not until recently achieved popularity. Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, the latter of whom won the 1974 Nobel Prize in Economy, were the chief thinkers behind a movement considered outside the mainstream of economic thought. The School advocated a near total laissez-faire economy and praised the virtues of individualism against

choose to raise my credit limit, why should they? Implicit here is the idea that the federal government is just a really big version of you and your family. This is what Tea Party economists believe.”

¹⁶² “The Tea Party and George Bush: Wait, Bush is okay now?” Democracy in America blog, *The Economist*, April 17, 2010. http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2010/04/tea_party_and_george_bush/

¹⁶³ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 15-16, 31, 103.

the rise of socialism in the Soviet bloc.¹⁶⁴ Keynesianism was a favorite target for Hayek, who disavowed the use of statistical modeling and insisted that governments have a poor ability to predict the consequences of fiscal policy.¹⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, Ron Paul lists several Austrian school titles in his book and occasionally references the thinkers during presidential debates¹⁶⁶. In 2010, Glenn Beck devoted an entire episode of his Fox news program to a review of Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, which afterward became Amazon.com's number-one seller and for months stayed popular.¹⁶⁷ Tea Party organizing group FreedomWorks includes Ludwig von Mises' book *Human Action* and Hayek's *Serfdom* in its reading list.¹⁶⁸

Hugely influential in the Tea Party position against taxation is Grover Norquist, the head of Americans for Tax Reform, whose group encourages Republicans in Congress to sign a pledge promising to never vote to increase taxes. Numerous freshmen Republicans, with support from Tea Party enthusiasts, signed the pledge, and fear of a Norquist stance against primary candidates is enough to encourage moderates to sign on as well.¹⁶⁹ Norquist hopes to shrink the size of the federal government radically to point where it can "drown in a bathtub"¹⁷⁰ and shares radical libertarian views about the size and scope of government action similar to those of the Austrian school.

¹⁶⁴ Joshua Green, "The Tea Party's Brain," *The Atlantic*, November, 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Tamara Keith, "Austrian Economist Hayek Finds New Fans," *NPR* November 15, 2011.

<http://www.npr.org/2011/11/15/142307737/austrian-school-economist-hayek-finds-new-fans>

¹⁶⁶ Paul, *Revolution*, "A Reading List for a Free and Prosperous America."

¹⁶⁷ Tamara, "Hayek Finds New Fans," 2011.

¹⁶⁸ Michael Duncan, "FreedomWorks Reading List," July 13, 2011.

<http://www.freedomworks.org/blog/mduncan/freedomworks-summer-reading-list>.

¹⁶⁹ *60 Minutes*. "The Pledge: Grover Norquist's Hold on the GOP," November 20, 2011.

http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18560_162-57327816/the-pledge-grover-norquists-hold-on-the-gop/?pageNum=3&tag=contentMain;contentBody.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

The influence of the pledge, with its threat of primary campaign retribution, rears its head in ongoing Congressional debates. The failure of the deficit reduction super-committee stemmed in large part from the total opposition of Republicans to consent to any tax increases. The payroll tax cut also faced opposition because House Republicans are unwilling to raise taxes on high-income earners marginally to cover the cost of extension. The position of House Republicans on deficit reduction is also not within the political mainstream, not even a position shared by a majority of Republican voters. The average Republican voter wanted 26 percent of deficit reduction to come in the form of tax increases and the remaining 74 percent to come from spending reductions, but the House Republican line is 100 percent spending reductions with zero tax increases, a position only 20 percent of Americans share.¹⁷¹ Though public opinion polling on this question does not distinguish between Tea Party and non-Tea Party supporters, the numbers alone can safely inform that there is at least probable disagreement among Tea Party supporters over the combination of tax increases and spending cuts to reduce the deficit. The extreme, united position by House Republicans also demonstrates the gap between elite and public opinion.

Economic research may hold part of the answer as to why 2008-2010 proved to be such a strong time for the rise of the Tea Party and its views against government spending, despite the huge increases in debt up until 2008. Wharton Business School professors Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers argue that even though trust in Congress, financial institutions, and government in general has been on the decline for two decades, the Great Recession exacerbated these trends. The patterns held in other countries as well, with those

¹⁷¹ Nate Silver, "GOP's No Tax Stance is Outside Political Mainstream," *The New York Times*, July 13, 2011. <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/13/house-republicans-no-tax-stance-far-outside-political-mainstream/?ref=grovergnorquist>.

experiencing higher unemployment rates also experiencing lower levels of trust in banks and government. Stevenson and Wolfers point out, however, that past correlations between economic downturn and public trust have not been statistically significant, and they are uncertain about whether the findings point to a broader pattern or simply a unique case in this instance of recession.¹⁷² The Tea Party rise and its anger over the expanding size of federal government may be a manifestation of discontent that brews during periods of high unemployment. That might explain why fiscal conservative criticism of government debt did not burst out as the Tea Party until the depths of the recession, since it greatly exacerbated trends of declining trust in government.

Others have demonstrated a relationship between income inequality and party polarization. As sorting into parties happens increasingly along economic lines, parties tend to cater their platforms to appeal to certain economic groups.¹⁷³ In the case of politics after Obama's election, this means that Republicans focus on lowering taxes to appeal to high-income earners, while the Democrats are focusing on income inequality and the Buffet rule as a campaign strategy. The Tea Party supports Republicans and the more recent Occupy movement supports Democrats, both movements and parties as opposing sides in fiscal policy.

Morris Fiorina argues that, while political science attempts to explain the culture war by examining religious or social differences, most splits in public opinion are attributable to income inequality. Economic elites, like political elites, hold extreme views; the middle class

¹⁷² Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, "Trust in Public Institutions over the Business Cycle," American Economic Association, March 8, 2011.

<http://bpp.wharton.upenn.edu/betseys/papers/TrustinPublicInstitutions.pdf>

¹⁷³ Bart Bonikowski, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Harvard University, quoted in "Rich Against Poor, Red Against Blue," Benjamin Lopez and Andrew Liu, *Harvard Political Review* (undergraduate journal), November 6, 2011. <http://hpronline.org/covers/democracy-today/rich-against-poor-red-against-blue/>.

and most Americans hold moderate views.¹⁷⁴ This is powerful explanation for the difference between well-funded Tea Party institutions such as FreedomWorks and the Koch brothers, who hold radical free-market views but disdain social issues, and most Tea Party voters, who are both more moderate on fiscal issues and more attentive to social issues.

The media, scholarship, and many Tea Party activists themselves portray the movement as one strictly focused on economic issues, in contrast to the social policy questions that dominated the Bush years. Some sympathizers downplay differences over social issues such as gay marriage, arguing that the discussion brackets these third-rail topics in favor of the more topical economic concerns.¹⁷⁵ This paper argues that though the Tea Party places economic concerns at the top of the agenda, resentment over social issues such as gay marriage and abortion persists. Racial undertones and religious beliefs may also affect the tenor of economic grievances.¹⁷⁶ The debate over federal spending, taxation, and the debt may be the tip of the iceberg of an entire range of concerns about the direction of the nation. The vitriolic rhetoric and frustration some Tea Partiers express over economic issues happens because these are tied to more deeply-held, fundamental questions about the meaning of life.

Culture war scholarship also sees the potentiality for controversial issues to spiral into a web of lightning rods, as one scholar articulates, “Behind the contentious argument about the legal rights of gays and lesbians was a more serious debate over the fundamental nature of the family and appropriate sexuality.”¹⁷⁷ As the focal point for a range of issues, questions of

¹⁷⁴ Fiorina, *Culture War?* 134-138.

¹⁷⁵ Foley, *Three Principles*, 224.

¹⁷⁶ Skocpol et. al, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (journal article) 26.

¹⁷⁷ James Davison Hunter and Alan Wolfe, *Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life* (Brookings Institution Press, 2006) 16.

government involvement in the economy take on a more central, foundational nature for activists with lingering concerns of another sort.

What Public Opinion Polls Tell Us

Conventional wisdom on the Tea Party paints supporters as radical ideologues on the size of the government, but public opinion polling presents a more complicated story. I begin with a comparison of Tea Party supporters with all respondents, followed by a comparison of Tea Party Republican voters and non-Tea Party Republicans.

Despite the fact that Tea Party supporters are slightly less likely than all respondents to rate their economic condition negatively, they rate the condition of the economy as worse than others. 64 percent of all respondents declare their financial situation as “very good,” compared to 70 percent of all Tea Party respondents. 19 percent of all respondents claim economic hardship as a result of the recession, compared with just 14 percent of Tea Party respondents. By a margin of 20 percentage points above all respondents, 54 to 34, Tea Partiers call the state of the economy “very bad.” Only 14 percent of Tea Partiers think the economy is improving, and 42 percent believe it is getting worse, compared to 33 percent and 23 percent, respectively, among all respondents.¹⁷⁸ These splits present an interesting dilemma – why do Tea Party sympathizers perceive the economy to be declining at a rate higher than all Americans but at the same time are personally affected less by such a decline?

Responding to questions about the federal government’s impact on economic recovery, Tea Partiers were predictably more skeptical than all respondents were. In assigning blame for the state of the economy, 32 percent of all respondents blamed the Bush administration, compared to 5 percent of Tea Partiers. Tea Partiers directed most of the difference in Bush

¹⁷⁸ New York Times/CBS poll “Economy and the Deficit” and “Overall Demographics.”

administration blame to Congress, and 28 percent blamed Congress alone, compared to just 10 percent of all respondents. Only 10 percent of Tea Partiers think the stimulus improved the condition of the economy and only 17 percent saw the bailouts of financial institutions as necessary for the economy, with 74 percent believing the economy would have improved without the bailouts. This is contrast with all respondents, of whom 32 percent saw the stimulus as improving the economy, 39 percent saw the bailouts as necessary, with 51 percent believing the economy would improve without bailouts.

What's not so surprising is the greater margins of critical views of government action among Tea Party sympathizers. What is surprising is the areas of agreement between the Tea Party and all Americans, a reflection in the former of widespread discontent and skepticism in government's effectiveness. The most popular response to the question of the stimulus' effectiveness was "no impact," shared by 52 percent of Tea Partiers and 44 percent of all respondents. A slim majority of all respondents and a large majority of Tea Partiers saw the bailouts as unnecessary to economic recovery. If the conventional wisdom sees the Tea Party as radically different than most Americans, cursory analysis of these questions of economic recovery show that low trust in government's corrective market power is a popular sentiment. While there are divergences between Tea Partiers and all Americans on these issues, in both camps a plurality or majority of moderate views win out.

On perceptual questions about taxes and the deficit, differences persist along with areas of agreement. A majority of Tea Party respondents and all respondents both believe that the income tax they pay is fair, at 52 percent and 62 percent, respectively. In assigning blame for high budget deficits, the Tea Party again is more reluctant to place responsibility with the Bush administration, at 6 percent, while 39 percent of all respondents blame Bush. Vesting

responsibility with Obama administration (24 percent to 8 percent, respectively) and Congress (37 percent and 19 percent, respectively) makes up the difference in the Bush administration.

One of the largest splits in opinion comes on the question of whether the government should prioritize spending money to create jobs or reducing the deficit, with 76 percent of Tea Partiers favoring deficit reduction and 50 percent of all respondents favoring job creation. Both categories were nearly evenly split on choosing between deficit reduction and tax cuts, with 49 percent of Tea Partiers and 47 percent of all respondents preferring tax cuts and 42 percent of Tea Partiers and 45 percent of all respondents favoring deficit reduction, with some undecided between the two. Analyzing just these numbers portrays the Tea Party along line of traditional analysis, more concerned with the debt than with federal stimulus efforts. But as the next selection of responses suggests, the narrative is not simply black and white on the role of government spending in relation to debt and taxes.

A whopping 92 percent of Tea Party respondents favor prefer a small government providing fewer services than a larger government providing more services, and 50 percent of all respondents agree with that position, compared to 37 percent who favor a larger government doing more. But when asked whether the benefits of Social Security and Medicare are worth the cost to taxpayers, a majority of all respondents and a majority of Tea Partiers answered in the affirmative, at 76 percent and 62 percent, respectively. A reason that Tea Partiers oppose a larger government offering more services but approve of spending on Social Security and Medicare may be that Tea Partiers are more likely to have a member of their family receiving these benefits, with positive impacts more readily discernible. Since Tea Party supporters tend to older than the population at large, the potential that they will

rely on these benefits at some point is also greater than for a younger section of moderate voters. Skocpol and Williamson's narrative may fit: the Tea Party doesn't oppose government spending in the abstract. Opposition instead arises from the perceived "undeserving" receiving handouts from the system without having paid into it.

A final explanation may be the traditional distinction between abstract and tangible questions that have plagued polls of political science for generations. Americans traditionally want to receive more government benefits and also pay less in taxes. When given specific issues that require government attention or areas where the federal government could spend more, pluralities and majorities favor increased attention and spending. Americans want the federal government to spend more on them while they spend less on the federal government – an unachievable feat. In answering public opinion poll questions, Americans are ideologically conservative but operationally liberal¹⁷⁹: they want small government in the abstract but want government to do a litany of specific things when asked.¹⁸⁰ Recent polls have also reflected this tendency, that although support for increased spending decreased,

¹⁷⁹ For an excellent summary, see Christopher Ellis and James Stimson, "Pathways to Ideology in American Politics: the Operational-Symbolic Paradox Revisited," http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/Working_Papers_files/Pathways.pdf. They write, "The reason for ongoing controversy over what might seem a simple fact is a paradox, now long known (see Free and Cantril 1967, Cantril and Cantril 1999, Stimson 2004), that American public is, on average, operationally liberal and at the same time symbolically conservative. When asked about specific government programs and specific social goals, the American public generally wants the government to do more, spend more, and redistribute more. But at the same time, citizens are considerably more likely to identify themselves as conservatives than as liberals. The American public, in other words, generally wants more government-based solutions to social problems, but overwhelmingly identifies with the ideological label that rejects those solutions. At the individual level, this implies that a great many Americans hold conflicted beliefs, thinking of themselves as "conservative" while supporting predominantly liberal public policies." They also chart divergent courses toward ideological conservatism, arguing that it may be difficult for social conservatives to support political conservatism on non-social issues.

¹⁸⁰ Free Cantril, *The Political Beliefs of Americans*. Skocpol also writes, "That Americans are, simultaneously, 'ideological conservatives' and 'operational liberals' has been documented for as long as social scientists have been able to probe and measure public opinion," concluding that claims to the contrary are incorrect. Skocpol, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (book), 55.

opposition to cutting existing spending remains high.¹⁸¹ As an outgrowth of this traditional dilemma, Tea Party members may simply be opposed to government spending *in the abstract* but support it when presented with specific policies in which the costs and benefits are clearly understood. This suggests that opinion polls could do a greater service to scholarship on the ideology of the Tea Party by posing specific questions to sympathizers about whether spending on specific programs is important given the costs taxpayers shoulder.

Turning to the differences between Tea Party Republicans and non-Tea Party Republicans, one finds that Tea Partiers are more likely to have fear about the economy, just as they were in comparison to all respondents. 54 percent of Tea Party Republicans think the economy is “very bad,” compared to just 37 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans surveyed. 41 percent of Tea Partiers fear their economic class will go down because of the recession and 32 percent of non-Tea Party Republicans share that view.

Tea Partiers are less likely than the rest of the GOP to report economic hardship, at 14 percent against 21 percent¹⁸², which raises the question this paper posed earlier: why do Tea Partiers have a greater fear than others for the economy’s condition when they are less likely to suffer its direct consequences? On the role of the federal government, the Tea Party Republicans are more likely to question its ability to influence the economy. 74 percent of Tea Partiers believed the economy would improve without the bailouts of financial institutions, while 57 percent of other Republicans agreed with that view. Tea Partiers

¹⁸¹ Pew Research Center, “Fewer want spending to grow, but cuts remain unpopular,” February 10, 2011. <http://www.people-press.org/2011/02/10/fewer-want-spending-to-grow-but-most-cuts-remain-unpopular/>.

¹⁸² Ekins, “Character and Origins,” 18. Ekins consolidates five opinion polls, one of which is the *CBS/NYTIMES* poll this paper cites earlier, as well as two in-person surveys of Tea Party. These small sample-size surveys probably exaggerate some ideological positions, if one defers to the traditional political science analysis that party activists are more partisan than non-activists. These surveys have the benefit of drawing clear distinctions with non-Tea Party Republicans, but Ekins does not investigate the extent to which the small sample size of partisans influences their ideological surveys or the differences between Tea Party activists and those who by phone merely reported sympathy with or support for the movement.

believe the stimulus package made the economy worse, at 36 percent, with 24 percent of other Republicans concluding similarly.¹⁸³ Non-Tea Party Republicans are also more likely to approve of the federal government spending money to create jobs, even when it adds to the deficit, with only 47 percent prioritizing deficit reduction in comparison to 76 percent of Tea Partiers who place that first. Tea Party Republicans are also much more likely than other Republicans to oppose raising taxes on those making \$250,000 a year or more, with 80 percent of the former opposed and 56 percent of the latter.¹⁸⁴

Kate Zernike draws comparisons between the Tea Party's responses to the CBS/NY Times poll and Donald Warren's surveys in *The Radical Center*.¹⁸⁵ Citing the Times poll, she writes that 56 percent of Tea Partiers believe the Obama administration caters policies to favor the poor and 73 percent find government payments to welfare recipients encourage them to neglect work and remain in poverty. These are similar to responses Warren documented in 1972 and 1975, that welfare encouraged laziness and specifically favored racial minorities. Zernike also charts the possibility that the economy touched off a unique array of already-existing social concerns, writing, "As in the 1970s, economic insecurity intersected with cultural anxiety [...] What underline the movements, then and now, was a

¹⁸³ Ibid. 18-19

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 17

¹⁸⁵ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 57-59. See also Donald Warren, *The Radical Center: Middle Americans and the Politics of Alienation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976). Warren finds several attributes very similar to present-day Tea Partiers. He writes, "the MAR [Middle American Radical] ideology stresses that the cause of problems is individual – such as laziness – in regard to welfare programs," a view that supports the deserving/undeserving distinction Tea Partiers favor. He continues, "Perhaps such a prolonged drop in standard of living, following earlier gains, is the catalyst for the growth and emergence of the MAR ideology. A perceived decline in the quality of the local community and neighborhood social and physical environment is one major distinguishing attribute of those we have grouped under the heading of Middle American Radicals. Dissatisfaction about safety, morality and the neighborhood are key elements in this perspective," 53. Thus, MAR views about the economy and their perceived well-being not only have much to do with the actual state of the economy and government policy – their views are bound up with resentment over social issues. This provides some historical context for Tea Party grievances.

sense among protestors that they were not respected and not listened to by the people in power.”¹⁸⁶

What might distinguish Tea Party Republicans from non-Tea Party Republicans more clearly is the underlying cultural resentment, a sense that the institutions are not working for them or considering their interests. A difference in the level of respect they feel from the government and trust they place in Congress may help explain more fiscally conservative positions on taxation and the ability of the government to address economic downturns. This is also a difference between the Tea Party and the rest of the American electorate more broadly, but it is worth restating that the Tea Party’s positions on the stimulus, bailouts, etc. are not only in congruence with other Republicans, but with a majority of Americans. The greater majorities for particular positions on the stimulus, bailouts, etc. may also be an indication of the rigidity and partisan sorting that occurs among the most active members of the electorate. Given that two surveys Elkin cites, positions may be more extreme than the vast majority of inactive, apathetic Americans – but that they overlap in important places hammers home that the ideological differences are not insurmountable.

New Hampshire

An analysis of the 2010 midterm Congressional elections in New Hampshire reveals the importance of economic issues, especially among the Tea Party activist base of the Republican party. Dante Scala’s account of the New Hampshire Senate primary sheds light on how economic concerns influenced elections at all levels in the state. He writes, “[Kelly] Ayotte concentrated her fire on fiscal issues and the size of government, criticizing the 2009

¹⁸⁶ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 58-59.

federal stimulus package and healthcare reform legislation of 2010.”¹⁸⁷ Running as the establishment candidate, Ayotte tried to reach out with advertisements that stressed her opposition to Obamacare, debt, and the bailouts. Scala also interviews Tea Party organizer Andrew Hemingway, who described the driving issues behind New Hampshire’s Tea Party as “a culmination of things. It started out with the bailouts. I think, ultimately, it’s not necessarily the bailouts, it’s the philosophy. It’s a massive power grab by the federal government. I think that is what underlies everything.”¹⁸⁸ This statement also gives more strength to a reading of the Tea Party as being focused on the economy in the context of broader perceptions about the role and power of the federal government. Specifically at the state level, Tea Party opposition takes the form of refusing stimulus funding or emphasizing states’ rights, drawing distance between local governance and an inaccessible Washington.

New Hampshire Budget Debate

The 2011 budget debate in the General Court resulted in one of the largest spending cuts in history for the fiscal year 2012-2013 appropriations. The final bill, which became law without the governor’s signature, put spending to \$10.3 billion from nearly \$11.4 billion, a cut of over 11 percent.¹⁸⁹ The bill cut funding for higher education¹⁹⁰ and case managers who aid the elderly poor,¹⁹¹ ended deductions for hospitals paying the Medicaid enhancement tax,¹⁹² and forced the shutdown of streetlights statewide.¹⁹³ The budget also decreased

¹⁸⁷ Scala, “Mama Grizzly,” in *Key States, High Stakes*, 15.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 19

¹⁸⁹ Jake Berry, “\$1 billion NH budget trim devastates health, service, education programs,” *Nashua Telegraph*, December 30, 2011. <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/944893-196/1-billion-nh-budget-trim-devastates-health.html>

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Norma Love, “NH budget cut reduces oversight for elderly poor,” *Foster’s Daily Democrat*, July 18, 2011 <http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110718/NEWS0201/110719575/-1/FOSNEWS0409>

¹⁹² Denis Paiste, “NH hospitals: state budget cuts ‘devastating,’” *Union Leader*, June 26, 2011, <http://www.unionleader.com/article/20110626/NEWS12/706269971>

revenues by lowering the states' cigarette tax to \$1.58 a pack from \$1.68 a pack, which reduced fees collected by \$6.5 million over the first four months of the 2012 fiscal year in comparison to the same period of the prior year.¹⁹⁴

The budget bill passed in the House by a vote of 243-124, with overwhelming Republican support.¹⁹⁵ Reps. Boehm, Bowers, Burt, Christensen, Manuse, Tasker, and Winter all voted for the bill, and Tea Party legislators not interviewed including Rep. Susan DeLemus joined their Republican colleagues in voting affirmatively.¹⁹⁶

Comparing Federal Debt and the State Budget

The chapter now turns to the legislators' views on a range of economic and fiscal issues, beginning with the federal government. New Hampshire legislators express frustration at the federal debt and point to their recent state budget cuts as evidence of fiscal responsibility. Rep. Chris Christensen, who presents himself as a moderate Republican, said, "It's hard not to be cynical. Sometimes I think people want to drive us into the ground to be forced into socialism."¹⁹⁷ He also criticized Obama's lack of leadership and failure to offer his own comprehensive plan to reduce the debt.

Rep. John Burt, who identifies with the Tea Party, commented on the recent debt ceiling debate, saying "They should have shut the government down. We won't be able to borrow either way."¹⁹⁸ He explained that the federal government would have its credit rating downgraded to a point where lenders no longer want to provide money, preventing the

¹⁹³ David Brooks, "NH budget cuts forcing DOT to turn off the lights," *Nashua Telegraph*, April 21, 2012 <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/958080-196/nh-budget-cuts-forcing-dot-to-turn.html>

¹⁹⁴ Kevin Landrigan, "4 months in, cigarette tax cut no help," *Nashua Telegraph*, November 3, 2011 <http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/newsstatenewengland/938717-227/4-months-in-cigarette-tax-cut-no.html>

¹⁹⁵ New Hampshire General Court, 2011 Roll Call Votes, HB1 <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/nhgccrollcalls/rollcallsbyvotedetail.aspx>

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Christensen interview.

¹⁹⁸ Burt interview.

government from paying its bills, the same result as the failure to raise the debt ceiling. The difference, he stressed, was that the debt ceiling in the long run would restore the nations' credibility as a lender.

Rep. Andrew Manuse, who also identifies with the Tea Party, echoed Burt's concerns. "I oppose raising the debt ceiling at all," he said. "I honestly don't think we can recover at this point I think the country's headed for default or dissolution. Our republic is at stake if we still have one," he added.¹⁹⁹

Rep. Ralph Boehm, who says he is sympathetic to the Tea Party's views, said "Washington is out of touch"²⁰⁰ when it comes to spending and the debt ceiling. He felt money could be saved by eliminating the Department of Education and reducing the role of the Department of Homeland Security, which in his view "hasn't worked." Boehm also saw State Department aid programs as wasteful (despite the small percentage of federal spending they represent) but he accepts funding for disaster relief, such as Haiti after its recent earthquake.

Rep. Spec Bowers, a self-described Republican with libertarian leanings, drew parallels between the increases in spending in New Hampshire and at the federal level, but also drew distinctions. "At the federal level their attitude seems to be 'pay a group of people to dig a ditch and fill it up' – they claims it helps the economy but it hasn't worked," he said, using Japan's lost decade and the ongoing economic instability in Europe to make his point.²⁰¹ Bowers outlined a whole slew of federal programs worthy of elimination from the budget, including earmarks for small airports that serve few passengers but cost millions in taxpayer

¹⁹⁹ Manuse interview.

²⁰⁰ Boehm interview.

²⁰¹ Bowers interview.

dollars. Farm subsidies, which receive overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress, mainly go to the rich “like Ted Turner” and big agribusiness, despite its presentation as beneficial to small farmers, he said. “The Department of Energy gets in the way of people trying to produce energy,” he further offered, as well as criticizing the Department of Transportation’s attachment of strings to funding it provides to states.

Bowers admitted he knew “more about the federal government than the state” but cited Washington state as an example of how the budget process could prioritize the most important spending. Washington governor required each state agency to shed 10% of its budget and provide a list ranking its most important projects and allocations. In such a way, the state could eliminate wasteful spending while preserving its most important services.²⁰² Bowers plans to introduce a similar measure to New Hampshire to help future budget committees decide how to trim spending more efficiently.

Bowers also had strong feelings about the debt ceiling debate, calling the deal “absurd” because it only decreased the rate of increase, rather than actually decreasing spending. Freezing spending at current levels would be preferable, he argued, and accounting tricks to count the drawdown of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as money saved obscure the real extent of the cuts. Bowers said he personally would have voted against the final bill and added that the “cut, cap, and balance” plan did not even go far enough toward reducing the debt.

Rep. Steve Winter, a former Libertarian Party candidate for New Hampshire governor and now a Republican, called worries about not raising the debt ceiling “hype about

²⁰² For more information, see the Washington state Office of Financial Management, “Priorities of Government” budget. <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/budget/pog/>.

nothing.”²⁰³ He drew a comparison to an individual consumer, saying, “If I have \$10,000 on a credit card I don’t default, I just don’t get more money.” He said the main problem with the debt ceiling debate is that Congress already appropriated the money and now seeks to rescind its own funding. Instead, Winter is a proponent of the House Republican plan to cut spending, cap it as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, and pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. He added that the tax rates should stay where they are, but is open to closing loopholes in order to generate additional revenue. Raising taxes to prevent layoffs slows economic growth, he explained, because “private employment creates wealth but public employment doesn’t because all of its income comes from taxes.” Assessing the gravity of the debt ceiling, he called the US “half a step above Greece” in terms of fiscal soundness.

Welfare

Criticism of welfare, particularly food stamps, was a component of several legislators’ comments on what programs they would like to see reduced or eliminated. Rep. Burt said that President Clinton’s welfare reform efforts didn’t work because the law allows one to claim unemployment benefits just for looking for a new job, and not necessarily for finding employment, which encourages people to stay unemployed. Burt did not express categorical opposition to welfare, saying, “If someone truly needs it, I’m there.” He did offer an anecdote that hit on many of the Tea Party’s themes about who is deserving to receive welfare benefits. A friend who “worked all of his life, who never took a handout” lost his job and then his wife was diagnosed with cancer. He needed food stamps to get by, he “paid his

²⁰³ Winter interview.

taxes all these years, but scammer's don't want to work a day." Burt also added that the youth have "social anxiety – kids don't want to work."²⁰⁴

Rep. Manuse also favored significant reform of welfare, calling the budget in New Hampshire "about half of what we needed to do," even though New Hampshire has one of the lowest total spending figures for welfare nationwide.²⁰⁵ He explained, "We're dealing with a situation where you have a whole bunch of dependent people. If you instantly cut them all off – I'd like to do that not out of hatred but out of morality. This is stealing and giving it to people who don't deserve it. People work every day, struggle their whole lives paying exorbitant taxes to those not willing to work. There's plenty of people on welfare not willing to do farm work, for example, because welfare checks are better, particularly if we're not allowing illegal immigrants to be employed." He continued, "Most of these people on welfare could absolutely find a job. A job is a job. I'd rather work for less than not work at all."²⁰⁶

Rep. Bowers also offered an anecdote about food stamps, citing a story of a friend working at a grocery store who had a customer pay for a filet mignon with food stamps. His friend expressed dismay that the welfare could receive a fancy cut of steak that he himself could not afford. He criticized Electronic Benefit Transfers, what he called a "credit card for people who get state money." Recipients are "buying lottery tickets at the supermarket with brand new cars, big flatscreen TVs. Some have up to \$500,000 in assets, but a low annual income so are getting food stamps – little examples" of wasteful spending, he said.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Burt interview.

²⁰⁵ Christopher Chantrill, "Compare Spending by State": Welfare, Fiscal year 2012 amount in billions, http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/compare_state_spending_2012b40s. New Hampshire spends \$.7 billion.

²⁰⁶ Manuse interview.

²⁰⁷ Bowers interview.

Rep. Winter called the past year in the House “a very difficult session” because “it’s easier to give out money than take it back – people consider it a right.” This holds to a familiar conclusion of congressional research that it is much easier to lobby to protect funding for a program because its benefits create a constituency to defend it, while the costs through taxes that fund it are diffuse and difficult to pin down. Winter said he is for a safety net for the most vulnerable, but taxpayer money does things it should not. For example, Winter believes drug addiction lands people in welfare, but he calls addiction a choice. Government should encourage them to “learn from poor choices, not enable them to keep making them.” This is a popular refrain among Tea Party sympathizers of rewarding bad behavior, and Winter drew the line from welfare directly to bailouts, saying “no company is too big to fail. The chickens are running the coops.” He wanted to hang on to “the old New England Yankee philosophy of self-reliance,” another common refrain among Tea Partiers.²⁰⁸

Taxation

Rep. Burt favors elimination of all corporate taxes. “Exxon shouldn’t pay taxes, we’ll just end up paying for it in gas and jobs,” he said. He said a flat tax is fairer, better for the economy, and would reduce loopholes and illegal employment. He additionally said the Tea Party “is everybody: low taxes, pro-business, ‘leave me alone.’”²⁰⁹

Rep. Manuse also was a favor a flat tax program, but not the traditional flat percentage program Steve Forbes campaigned on. Instead, he favors a fixed dollar amount of taxes for every citizen. “I want everyone to pay the same, then it’s fair. People aren’t getting any more or less services, everyone has a stake they should pay their fair share,” he said. Additionally,

²⁰⁸ Winter interview.

²⁰⁹ Burt interview.

he said, “Rich people shouldn’t be punished with higher taxes, that’s absurd. Rich people should be emulated” and offered *Atlas Shrugged* by Ayn Rand as an example of how the productive rich receive unfair treatment.²¹⁰

Rep. Christensen said that in trying to raise taxes for those earning \$250,000 a year or more, the “president is pushing class warfare.” He also said that a small business owner might make that much in a year and would be too arbitrary of a cutoff point. Instead of forcing millionaires to give money, the emphasis should be on charity because “they can spend money how they want.” “I give money to a candidate, it applies with taxes. It’s your right to give money to help people out,” he said, adding that he would not oppose closing loopholes to raise revenue.²¹¹

Conclusion

In comparing economic views of Tea Partiers against those all respondents in surveys, more Americans assign blame for the current state of the economy with the Bush administration and Wall Street and Tea Partiers assign more blame with Congress and the Obama administration. What is surprising is the amount of overlap between Tea Partiers and most Americans in their skepticism of the bailouts and stimulus package. Tea Partiers, however, are much less trusting and assign more blame in general than most Americans. Both groups are concerned about debt and spending, though Tea Partiers are overwhelmingly against raising taxes to pay for the debt, and both split on whether to prioritize tax cuts or debt reduction. Undergirding Tea Party sentiments on the economy are longstanding conservative economic traditions such as the Austrian School, and their coalescence at this

²¹⁰ Manuse interview.

²¹¹ Christensen interview.

stage in history may be in part due to the stagnant economy and dormant social views they associate with spending and taxation.

Non-Tea Party Republicans are to the right of most Americans on similar questions, but not as conservative as the Tea Party. They are more likely to support taxation as a way to address the debt and less likely to fault Congress for the lack of recovery. These differences, though small, may stem from a lack of emotional, perceptual views that government is abandoning them. Non-Tea Party Republicans do not share the extreme lack of trust in government as Tea Partiers.

New Hampshire legislators, especially those who identify with the Tea Party, are more extreme than most Americans on economic issues. Tea Partiers who support a narrative of the deserving against the undeserving on welfare probably would not support the total erosion of all social welfare programs, as Manuse does. There is also distinct support for Social Security and Medicare among Tea Partiers, perhaps in part to age and in part to the aforementioned narrative of working hard to earn government benefits. But the rigid, libertarian ideology of some legislators is unlikely to be popular among a Tea Party that still sees a role for government, if only for their direct economic benefit. The very concession by some legislators that the budget cuts are so difficult because of groups lobbying against them may highlight the lack of enthusiasm or effectiveness on the part of Tea Party voters to cut funding for programs from which they benefit.

The differences between Tea Party legislators and non-Tea Party Republican legislators exist, but are not as large as I initially expected. They share the same fiscal views, especially in New Hampshire, where support for dramatic budget cuts was across the board for Republicans. The differences between the moderate and radically conservative legislators I

interviewed are between an A and a B on the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance's report card, but all voted for the budget. This suggests that the chamber, according to traditional political science analysis, is more partisan and extreme in its views than the ordinary Americans who put them there.

Chapter 4: The Tea Party and Social Issues

Much of the disagreement among scholars, the media, and Tea Party activists themselves concerns the internal rivalry over social issues and fiscal issues. Dick Armey's FreedomWorks group, which funds and trains numerous Tea Parties nationwide, puts the emphasis solely on reigning in spending, taxation, and debt. Other supporters of this perspective include the young libertarians and socially agnostic voters Kate Zernike depicts in her work. There is also room at the table for social conservatives, seemingly adrift after enjoying prominence during the Bush year and sharing many of the same sentiments on limited government. The competition between libertarian and social conservative, atheist and religious, young and old plays out in this environment, sometimes at the cost of favoring one group over another.

This chapter begins by examining two conventional schools of thought on social conservatism in the Tea Party: first, that the movement focuses almost entirely on fiscal issues; second, that religious attendance and religious views play a determining role in Tea Party membership and place social goals in competition with economic ones. This chapter explores three issue areas, all of them national in some regards but some with a pronounced influence in New Hampshire: abortion, gay marriage, and marijuana decriminalization. New Hampshire legislators gave scant attention to these issues, giving spending and tax policy a primary role. This illustrates the central distinction between Tea Partiers and the legislators they elect – social issues are more important for voters than for legislators. The legislators are more likely to apply a libertarian policy to social issues that would alienate socially conservative voters.

Absence of Social Conservatism

Numerous activists and scholars argue that the Tea Party focuses solely on economic concerns, while relegating social issues to a secondary or irrelevant status. While Rasmussen and Schoen explain how social conservatism enjoyed premier status in the Republican Party during the Bush administration to the detriment of a focus on fiscal conservatism, they write that “economic conservatism, small-government libertarians, and social conservatism” joined under a large Tea Party umbrella.²¹² In her recent book, law professor Elizabeth Price Foley writes, “social issues such as abortion or gay marriage, by contrast, have an indirect relationship to both the principle of limited government and constitutional originalism, yet the Tea Party’s attitude toward them is best characterized as something between ambivalence and lukewarm support.”²¹³ She additionally cites the New York Times/CBS poll to substantiate the claim with an appeal to the relatively moderate stance of Tea Partiers on abortion and gay marriage.

Zernike also documents several conflicting instances of social movement focus in the Tea Party. FreedomsWorks, Dick Armey’s lobbying group that supports the Tea Party Patriots, has its deputies tell Tea Partiers to stay away from social issues to avoid fracturing the movement along those lines.²¹⁴ Zernike, like Foley, found that the Tea Party’s particular understanding of the Constitution translated into a states’ rights position on divisive topics such as abortion and gay marriage.²¹⁵ She also notes the problem that “the Tea Party could not agree on what it was about,” citing admonitions to activists preaching social visions while inviting former Rep. Tom Tancredo to give an incendiary speech against increased

²¹² Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad As Hell*, 50-51.

²¹³ Foley, *Three Principles*, 224.

²¹⁴ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 42.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* 70.

immigration.²¹⁶ The above accounts all fail to make a sufficient case that Tea Partiers are socially liberal, or even socially moderate. A more convincing explanation is that Tea Partiers were social conservatives before the movement's rise, and that while they may now assign priority to the economy, these social views inform their economic views.

Religious Influence and Social Attitudes

Skocpol and Williamson argue not only that social conservatives are prevalent in Tea Parties, but also that they are a particularly vocal wing of the movement. They specifically cite New Hampshire's Jerry DeLemus, leader of the Rochester 9/12 group and husband of Republican Rep. Susan DeLemus, who spoke of his Christianity and church involvement.²¹⁷ Another example is a Virginia Tea Party group whose increasing membership necessitated a larger meeting facility, which prompted a move to a local church and a prayer to begin meetings. These changes in turn alienated nonreligious and Jewish members of the group, highlighting a rift between secular, libertarian-oriented Tea Partiers and those of a traditional social conservative persuasion.²¹⁸ Skocpol and Williamson's conclusion is that the Tea Party is an alliance of these varying conservative factions, as Rasmussen and Schoen argued, but that both local Tea Party leaders and national figureheads must avoid becoming overtly religious in focus to avoid undermining the strength of their fiscal arguments and the potential to appeal to as wide a base as possible.

In interviewing Tea Partiers and reporting on Sen. Rand Paul's 2010 election campaign, *Rolling Stone* columnist Matt Taibbi mentions Paul's visit to the Creation Museum as a metaphor for the entire movement. He writes, "The Tea Party is many things at once, but one

²¹⁶ Ibid. 95.

²¹⁷ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, (Book) 37- 38.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 38-40.

way or another, it almost always comes back to a campaign against that unsafe urban hellscape of godless liberalism we call our modern world.”²¹⁹ Paul and his supporters expressed unease with illegal immigration, the status of whites under the Obama administration, and traditional social issues, which Taibbi finds to be evidence of a distinct religiosity around the Constitution and Christianity.

Religious participation and affiliation are additional metrics by which critics attempt to gauge the Tea Party’s social conservatism. A September 2010 American Values Survey found that 47 percent of respondents who considered themselves a part of the Tea Party movement also claim affiliation with the “religious right or Christian conservative movement.”²²⁰ The survey also compares Tea Partiers with evangelical affiliation against evangelicals without Tea Party affiliation and the public at large, finding, for example, that “nearly half (47%) of those identifying with the Tea Party movement believe that the Bible is the literal word of God, compared to one-third of the general population and nearly two-thirds of white evangelicals (65%).”²²¹ This puts Tea Party evangelicals and mainline Protestants between hardline religious non-Tea Partiers and all respondents in terms of the depth and breadth of religious belief. The New York Times/CBS poll similarly finds that 38 percent of Tea Partiers claim weekly church attendance, while only 27 percent of all respondents claim the same.²²²

²¹⁹ Matt Taibbi, “The Truth About the Tea Party,” *Rolling Stone*, September 26, 2010.

<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/matt-taibbi-on-the-tea-party-20100928>

²²⁰ Robert Jones and Daniel Cox, “Religion and the Tea Party in the 2010 Election: An Analysis of the Third Biennial American Values Survey,” (Public Religion Research Institute, October 2010)

<http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Religion-and-the-Tea-Party-in-the-2010-Election-American-Values-Survey.pdf> pp 1-2

²²¹ Ibid. 9,

²²² New York Times/CBS poll.

A poll by the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life found significant correlations between religious conservatives and Tea Partiers. Though a plurality of most religious denominations have not heard of the Tea Party or offered no opinion on it, white evangelical Protestants are “roughly five times as likely to agree with the movement as to disagree with it (44% to 8%).”²²³ Support sits at below one-third from mainline Protestants and Catholics, with stronger levels of disagreement from Jews and black Protestants. Of those who agree with the Christian conservative movement, 69 percent support the Tea Party, but only 42 percent of Tea Partiers agree with the Christian conservative movement.²²⁴ 46 percent of those respondents who agreed with the Tea Party had not heard of or had no opinion of the Christian conservative movement.

While these statistics all point to correlations, rather than causation, the survey also found that 53 percent of Tea Partiers listed religion as the most important influence on their position on same-sex marriage and 46 percent listed religion as the most important influence on their abortion views. By contrast, among all respondents, only 37 percent listed religion as the most important factor in their stance on same-sex marriage and only 28 percent listed religion as the defining influence on their abortion views.²²⁵ While the comparison between Tea Partiers and all respondents in this survey indicate that religion holds much greater defining importance for the former group than the latter group, the differences between respondents who vote or lean Republican and Tea Partiers is not great. 52 percent of Republicans said religion was the most important factor for their opinion of same-sex

²²³ Scott Clement and John C. Green, “The Tea Party, Religion, and Social Issues,” Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life, February 23, 2011. <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1903/tea-party-movement-religion-social-issues-conservative-christian>

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

marriage and 40 percent listed it for abortion, differences of one and six percentage points in comparison to Tea Partiers.²²⁶ While these comparisons do not demonstrate that those claiming identification with the Tea Party are substantially more religious or socially conservative than Republicans generally, it does strengthen arguments that the Tea Party is not distinct from the views of a majority of Republican voters on social issues. It gives more credence to the claim that Tea Partiers were already social conservative Republicans before the movement took off, rather than Independents with a libertarian position on social issues.

Abortion

The most common misconception on abortion is its status as the heart of a so-called culture war without possibility of compromise. Careful analysis of public opinion polling gives a different story: the majority of Americans support neither unrestrained abortion nor outlawed abortion, rather they support abortion with limits. Polling frequently only gives two options on the abortion debate, for or against, but these questions miss the nuance of more carefully worded surveys. As Morris Fiorina writes in the defining culture war text, Americans “believe abortion should be legal but it is reasonable to regulate it in various ways. They are ‘pro-choice, but.’”²²⁷ This lens is a useful heuristic for analyzing the various polling data on the Tea Party’s abortion views, as well as explaining the moderate stance of Americans on a litany of other social issues.

The New York Times/CBS survey finds that a plurality of both all respondents and those who claim affiliation with the Tea Party support abortion that is “available but with limits,” confirming Fiorina’s analysis.²²⁸ 36 percent of all respondents thought it should be generally

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Fiorina, *Culture War?* 92.

²²⁸ New York Times/CBS poll.

available in comparison to just 20 percent of Tea Partiers, with the difference being made up in a greater number of Tea Party respondents who support abortion with limits and outlawing abortion. 53 percent of Tea Party respondents thought the Roe v. Wade decision was a “bad thing,” compared to just 34 percent of all respondents who agreed, with 58 percent of all respondents calling the decision a “good thing.”²²⁹ In light of arguments from Zernike and Foley that the Tea Party view of the Constitution is a driving factor behind positions on same-sex marriage and abortion, it’s possible that Roe v. Wade’s applicability to all fifty states runs contrary to the states’ rights position of some Tea Party respondents. That could explain why Tea Partiers favor abortion with limits but oppose the ruling. Still, the results of the survey demonstrate that Tea Partiers are not quite in lockstep with the religious right when it comes to opposition to abortion rights.

Other surveys reach the conclusion that Tea Partiers are substantially more conservative on social issues than those who do not claim affiliation with the movement. The Pew study found that 52 percent of all respondents said abortion should be legal in all or most cases, in comparison to 38 percent of those who vote or lean Republican and 34 percent who identify with the Tea Party. 42 percent of all respondents think abortion should be illegal in all or most circumstances, while 56 percent of Republicans and 59 percent of Tea Partiers agree.²³⁰ This question is problematic since it gives no middle ground option – either most abortions should be illegal or most abortions should be legal. An even split between respondents then seems inevitable when there are really only two possible answers, when in reality, the nuance of “abortion with limits” more accurately reflects the view of a plurality of Americans and a plurality of Tea Partiers.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Pew Study.

In the same manner as the Pew study, the American Values Survey gives the all or most option for legal and illegal. This survey finds the Tea Party more conservative on abortion than the others, with 63 percent answering that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases and only 35 percent answering that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, with roughly the same breakdown for white Tea Partiers, Christian conservatives, and white Christian conservatives. 55 percent of all respondents favor abortion's legality in all or most circumstances, with 42 percent supporting its illegality in all or most circumstances.²³¹ Again, there is no option for "legal in most circumstances with limits," a response that garners the most support in polls such as the New York Times/CBS survey or the ones Fiorina lists.

The New Hampshire legislators had nothing to say about abortion, with one exception. Rep. Winter noted that *Roe v. Wade* settled the abortion rights issue and states are now unable to challenge it. He opposes a spousal consent bill that came to a roll call vote in the House, but he also said, "I don't want taxpayers to subsidize abortions. Medicaid shouldn't pay for elective surgery. We're not going to let people die because of anti-abortion [views] though."²³² Winter was referring to speculation that the Affordable Care Act permits government financed abortions, which it does not. Rep. Christensen is also opposed to spousal consent while Rep. Boehm supports the measure.²³³

²³¹ American Values Survey.

²³² Winter interview.

²³³ Northeast Information Services. *The Handbook of New Hampshire Elected Officials 2011 & 2012*. Pp 29, 39. The "Blue Book" includes select roll call votes on controversial issues from the last term – as such, this applies only to representatives who are continuing in office from the last term. The abortion parental consent bill listed in individual biographies references HB 1662. The Blue Book describes it as "relative to consent for abortion. The restrictive provisions of this bill would have applied to all women from puberty to menopause and in almost all instances would have required spousal notification when a married woman seeks an abortion. The recommendation of Inexpedient to Legislate vote was adopted 243-110 on February 10, 2010." pp 166-167. The

Gay Marriage

Though the abortion debate remains an area of controversy, that the Supreme Court decided its fate conclusively in a series of decisions leaves less room for productive conflict than does the issue of legal recognition of same-sex couples. Marriage licenses and civil unions for same-sex couples are comparatively more recent phenomena, and the Proposition 8 ballot initiative in California demonstrates a back-and-forth contestation that in all likelihood will reach the Supreme Court. Since the majority of Americans oppose full marriage rights for gay couples, and the issue is current, Alan Wolfe declares gay marriage “the great exception to the argument that the importance of the culture war has been exaggerated.”²³⁴

Fiorina et. al find gay marriage to be just as divisive as Wolfe claims, with a solid majority of Americans opposed to marriage rights for gay couples and a plurality opposed to civil union status.²³⁵ But support is trending toward more spousal rights for same-sex couples, as younger respondents with more open views replace older and more conservative respondents. Moreover, traditional polls that only offer full marriage rights or no legal recognition of options miss the moderate stance Americans support. The New York Times/CBS poll finds that a majority of both Tea Partiers and all respondents support

book indicates support for or against the merits of the legislation, rather than the support for or against a procedural to kill the bill.

²³⁴ Wolfe, “The Culture War that Never Came,” in *Is There A Culture War?* 47. In a recent Boston College course “American Culture War Seminar,” Wolfe argues that he thought the culture war dead until the Tea Party rise and 2010 midterms, and maintains that gay marriage is the most controversial of its remaining battles.

²³⁵ Fiorina, Morris P. et al. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. 109-126. The polls included date to the 2004 election, while Fiorina admits that opinion is trending to be more inclusive of rights for same-sex couples. Analysis of more recent polling from 2009 shows that a plurality of Americans support either marriage or civil unions for gay couples, while the inclusion of both options on a survey may detract from the support for full marriage rights. For this discussion see Nate Silver, “Two National Polls, for the first time, show plurality support for gay marriage,” *FiveThirtyEight*, April 30, 2009. <http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/2009/04/two-national-polls-for-first-time-show.html>. A 2012 poll also indicates slim majority support for gay marriage, see Public Religion Resource Institute “Majority of Americans Do Not Believe Religious Liberty is Under attack.” March 15, 2012 <http://publicreligion.org/newsroom/2012/03/march-rns-2012-news-release/>

marriage rights or civil unions, with 40 percent of Tea Partiers and 30 percent of all respondents favoring no legal recognition.²³⁶ Only 17 percent of respondents who identify with the Tea Party support gay marriage rights in comparison to 39 percent of all respondents who hold that view. But 41 percent of Tea Partiers support civil unions, a good indication that they are not the radical, homophobic conservatives that pundits make them out to be.

As with the role that other social issues play in the Tea Party, the perception is that gay marriage takes a backseat to economic concerns. Rasmussen and Schoen say gay marriage is another signifier of a changing country, which supports an argument that these social issues are the rest of the iceberg. They write, “For populists on the right, gay marriage represents a fundamental alteration of social arrangements they are just not prepared to embrace. The resulting sense among the American electorate is all too clear: We are no longer living in the country we once knew.”²³⁷ Zernike quotes Mickey Edwards, a Republican who served in the US House, who said, “All of a sudden it wasn’t just that people were gay, now they’re getting married. All the things you grew up with, all the biases you had and believe were accurate, all the ways your daily life worked are being challenged.”²³⁸ Rather than campaigning for or against legalization of gay marriage, Tea Partiers react to it with the same sense of dislocation they feel for a whole range of changing societal norms.

Though a number of New Hampshire legislators expressed personal opposition to gay marriage, most were supportive of civil unions. Rep. Boehm said, “I don’t care what you do in your closet as long as I don’t know,” but added that it doesn’t have to be full marriage rights and indicated his support for civil unions. He explained further his roll call vote

²³⁶ New York Times/CBS poll.

²³⁷ Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad as Hell*, 26.

²³⁸ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 59.

opposition to gay marriage²³⁹, saying, “The people are against gay marriage and I’m representing the people. [Democrats] are afraid of letting them vote on a Constitutional amendment. Let the people decide.”²⁴⁰

Rep. Bowers confirmed the conventional wisdom on the Tea Party by saying of gay marriage, “I don’t want to think about it I want to concentrate on the economy.” He explained that in general the House postpones social issue legislation until the second year of a term, preferring to handle the budget in the first term. He supports civil unions but not gay marriage. “Legislators don’t write dictionaries. The definition of marriage is a man and a woman. We can say yes or no to civil unions but I favor taking marriage out of the description,” he said. Bowers expects a repeal of gay marriage in New Hampshire and its replacement with civil unions. “When society changes to that point, legislation should follow, not lead,” he concluded.²⁴¹

Rep. Burt said he’s not opposed to gay marriage and added, “I don’t have anything against gays.” He said that marriage comes down to one’s religion and as a Baptist he supports the idea of a traditional marriage with a man, woman, and child. He also explained that he does not attend church regularly.

Rep. Christensen called the gay marriage effort both ways in New Hampshire “much ado about nothing” since the “Supreme Court will tell us either way anyway so it’s moot.” He said he supports marriage that is between a man and a woman only, but he also is reluctant to embrace repeal of gay marriage rights now that they are on the books. “Insurance businesses look for a stable atmosphere. Changing the rules every few years makes it an unstable

²³⁹ Blue Book, 29.

²⁴⁰ Boehm interview.

²⁴¹ Bowers interview.

environment,” he said. Christensen also said that those with gay marriage licenses would not have them revoked and would be grandfathered in, otherwise the law would “trample all over everybody.” He concluded, “It’s a matter of being aware that we shouldn’t be passing legislation to run someone’s life on either side of the spectrum.”

Rep. Manuse addressed gay marriage only briefly indicating that he supported a repeal of gay marriage and its replacement with civil unions. When I pressed him how he was to reconcile this with his pro-liberty beliefs, he explained with a rather contrived argument that the government’s foray into defining marriage was what impeded the free exercise of individuals to determine their own definition of marriage and that by repealing this legislation, it would return the power to determine the meaning of marriage to churches and individuals.

Rep. Winter said he was pro-gay rights and supported civil unions. “If another person doesn’t harm me, they can do whatever the hell they want,” he said, echoing a common libertarian refrain. But he also indicated that marriage was a religious domain and thus the state should refrain from dictating marriage’s definition.

Ultimately, Bowers’ prediction that social issues would come up in the second session was correct. On his prediction that gay marriage would be repealed, he was incorrect. The House voted to kill the gay marriage repeal bill by a vote of 211 to 116 on March 21, 2012.²⁴² Reps. Boehm, Bowers, and Burt voted to keep the bill alive, indicating their support for the repeal. Reps. Christensen, Winter, and Tasker voted to kill the bill, while Rep.

²⁴² Kate Geiger, “New Hampshire House rejects repeal of gay marriage,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 2012. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/la-pn-new-hampshire-house-kills-repeal-of-gay-marriage-law-20120321,0,58731.story>

Manuse did not cast a vote.²⁴³ Motions to put gay marriage repeal as a non-binding referendum question on the November ballot also failed with a vote of 188-162 to kill it.²⁴⁴ Public opinion in New Hampshire also overwhelmingly opposed repeal, with 59 percent opposed to repeal and 31 percent supporting repeal, according to one recent poll taken before the repeal effort hit the General Court.²⁴⁵

Drug Policy

Opinion polling on various degrees of marijuana legalization is scarce, particularly so Tea Partiers. This paper posits as not particularly controversial that among older Tea Party supporters, such prospects would be alienating. One columnist argues that marijuana represents the biggest threat to cohesion between Tea Party libertarians and social conservatives, even greater than gay marriage because marijuana has not been subject to the same degree of public debate.²⁴⁶

Rep. Boehm described his political philosophy as libertarian except when it came to drug policy, where he favored a government role in restricting consumption. Rep. Bowers, by contrast, strongly favors legalization of medical marijuana. He said there is “broad support” for a measure to make available medical marijuana, calling it an issue of individual freedom. “Why does the government get to decide what medicine I can use with fatal disease?” he asked. He also testified that he had never used marijuana and “wouldn’t recognize it” if

²⁴³ New Hampshire General Court Bill Status System, HB437 Roll Call, March 21, 2012. http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/Roll_calls/billstatus_rcdetails.aspx?vs=189&sy=2012&lb=H&eb=HB0437&sortoption=&txtsessionyear=2012&txtbillnumber=HB437&ddlsporsors=&lrs=14.

²⁴⁴ Geiger, “New Hampshire House rejects repeal of gay marriage.”

²⁴⁵ Andrew Smith, “New Hampshire legislature faces tough year, difficult issues,” The WMUR Granite State Poll at The University of New Hampshire Survey Center, February 7, 2012. http://www.unh.edu/survey-center/news/pdf/gsp2012_winter_legapp020712.pdf. Perceptual factors were also strongly against repeal, with 46 percent of repeal opponents indicating they would be “very upset” if the repeal measure passed.

²⁴⁶ Chris Good, “How marijuana could split the Tea Party,” *The Atlantic*, August 4, 2010 <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/08/how-marijuana-could-split-the-tea-party/60921/>.

offered to him, but nevertheless defends the right of people to use it. Bowers used the history of the Prohibition amendments to argue by way of analogy that efforts at prohibiting consumption encourage consumption in rebellion to the law, making them ineffective deterrents and infringements on personal freedom. He also shared anecdotes of friends who suffered from cancer and could have benefited from marijuana use. Without going into specific details, he mentioned an author who could have benefited from the drug to prevent vomiting, but since it was illegal in New Hampshire, did not consume it. He vomited in his sleep one night and died from asphyxiation, a life marijuana could have saved had the state not banned it, Bowers said. He also recounted the story of a local farmer who had a tractor accident and suffered from severe back pain. The farmer relied on marijuana to help ease the pain.

Rep. Kyle Tasker is a champion of the marijuana decriminalization cause, having submitted a bill, HB 1526, to decriminalize possession of less than one half-ounce of marijuana. The bill passed with an amendment in the House by a single vote, with 162 yeas and 161 nays, on March 8, 2012.²⁴⁷ Reps. Tasker, Bowers, Christensen, Manuse, and Winter voted to support decriminalization, while Reps. Boehm and Burt voted against the measure. A bill that would allow for patients with serious medical conditions to possess and grow marijuana passed in the Senate by a 13 to 11 vote on March 28, and the House is currently debating the measure.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

²⁴⁷ New Hampshire General Court Bill Status System, "HB1526 Roll Call." http://gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/Roll_Calls/billstatus_rcdetails.aspx?vs=132&sy=2012&lb=H&eb=HB1526&sortoption=&txtsessionyear=2012&ddlspendors=&q=1&lsr=2650

²⁴⁸ Associated Press, "NH Senate Approves Medical Marijuana bill," March 28, 2012. *Boston.com* http://www.boston.com/news/local/new_hampshire/articles/2012/03/28/nh_senate_to_vote_on_medical_marijuana_bill/

This chapter investigated Tea Party views on social issues. While left-leaning pundits may argue that the group is not genuinely motivated by economic considerations, but rather is a long-standing alliance of social conservatives with new energy, the relative moderation of those who associate with the Tea Party on social views casts doubt on this proposition. As with all the analysis of polling, since it encompasses those with only weak or ideological ties to the Tea Party, rather than solely on activists who attend rallies or hold leadership positions, the extent of Tea Party moderation may be overstated. While many on the religious right have positive views of the Tea Party, the reverse is true only to a lesser extent. Tea Partiers are religious and claim that religious views inform their beliefs, but this does not translate into anything uniquely more conservative on social issues than already-existing Republicans and conservative Christians. If anything, the Tea Party's attempt to be an umbrella movement of ideological libertarians creates both a tension with and restraining force against the tendency to make social issue demands in the public sphere.

New Hampshire legislators are not genuinely interested in social issues, and when they are, they do so out of strong ideological commitment to it, rather than the characteristically different concerns of Tea Party voters. The mass of Tea Partiers have perceptual problems with the evolving nature of social relations – sexual permissiveness, technology, and a changing demographic of the nation's citizenry. These developments inspire fear and spark defensiveness about traditional, stable institutions such as marriage. New Hampshire legislators, while a few share the same generational fear for the country's direction, are much less emotional when it comes to their social issue positions. They are much more rigidly ideological, committed to libertarian propositions such as drug legalization that may very

well frighten the group of the electorate that supports their small government, low taxation rhetoric.

Consider the contrast between Reps. Boehm and Burt on the one hand, and libertarian-leaning ideologues like Tasker on the other. Boehm and Burt are grandfathers, they have concerns about the country in which their children will live in when they reach adulthood. As such, they do not support deregulation of drugs or threatening the stable institution of marriage with the prospect of extending that franchise to same-sex couples. Tasker is 26 years old, a libertarian who is consistent with his small government views be it taxes or cannabis. He does not share the same generational perspective of an America fallen from grace or one threatened by changing mores. Boehm and Burt much more closely correlate with the electorate in the public opinion polls – they have reasonably moderate views on social issues but lingering concerns because of the way these policies *feel*, rather than their actual letter.

Abortion does not factor on the radar as much for these legislators as gay marriage and marijuana policy – the former is settled law and the latter cases are hot-button current issues in the state. There was also not much mention of religion by any of the legislators, except when it came to defending a traditional definition of marriage. At that point, the importance of noninterference with religious freedom became a common refrain.

Chapter 5: The Tea Party, Race, and Immigration

Just as partisan commentators paint the Tea Party and its members in all-or-nothing terms on social mores or grassroots credentials, views similarly diverge on the movement's relationship with race. Liberals tend to exaggerate the isolated incidents of overt racist displays as indicative of all members²⁴⁹, while some conservatives tend to downplay the significance of these events to a vanishing point²⁵⁰. While at the level of rank-and-file, one can persuasively argue that there are well-meaning concerns with the size and scope of government that overlap with coded language once used to promote bigotry, among New Hampshire Tea Party legislators, this is seldom the case. There are longstanding reservations among Tea Party people over issues such as school busing and welfare spending that traditionally were racially charged. Immigration, though it remains a central concern for Tea Partiers writ large, was not an important issue for elected officials in New Hampshire, which is far from Mexico, the place where most view the problem to be. This chapter begins with an examination of literature on allegations of racism against Tea Partiers and defenses the other way, continues by exploring views on immigration, and concludes each investigation with the testimony of the New Hampshire legislators.

Statistical Racial Resentment

The majority of scholarship finds that Tea Partiers, though not overt racists, are statistically more likely to harbor unfavorable views of other races. This section proceeds with the data and follows with analysis of scholarly literature.

²⁴⁹ Taibbi, "The Truth About the Tea Party."

²⁵⁰ Brian Montopoli, "Herman Cain: I prove the Tea Party isn't racist," CBS News, May 31, 2011 http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20067671-503544.html.

The *New York Times* poll included a section of questions devoted to “Racial Attitudes.” When asked, “In recent years, has too much been made of the problems facing black people?” 52 percent of Tea Partiers answered “too much,” in comparison to just 28 percent of all respondents, a difference of 24 percentage points. Tea Partiers were also more likely to answer that blacks and whites have an equal chance of “getting ahead,” with all respondents responding that whites have a greater chance of social mobility by 15 percentage points. Despite this small difference, 60 percent of all respondents and 73 percent of Tea Partiers believe that the odds at upward mobility are equal. But while there is broad consensus on the prospects for individual success, Tea Partiers are more likely than all respondents to believe that the Obama administration’s policies favor blacks over whites, by 14 percentage points. Still, majorities of both those who identify with the Tea Party and all those surveyed believe Obama’s policies treat both groups the same way, at 65 percent and 83 percent, respectively.²⁵¹

A University of Washington survey polled seven states, but included an important caveat: it asked all respondents to rank their view of the Tea Party from strongly oppose, to somewhat oppose, to somewhat support, to strongly support. The survey then categorized responses to questions based on racial perceptions according to the four self-identifications. 72 percent of Tea Party “true believers” disagree with the statement that “generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class,” compared with 55 percent who moderately embrace of the movement and 28 percent of the movement’s true skeptics. 58 percent of all whites surveyed disagreed with the statement. By a similar margin, 73 percent of true believers agreed with

²⁵¹ New York Times/CBS poll.

the statement that “it’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites,” compared with 54 percent of middle of the road respondents and 56 percent of all whites.²⁵²

While the above survey questions make it clear that majorities of white Americans believe black social mobility hinges on merit and effort, additional favorability questions from the same study found that distrust of blacks and immigrants is widespread. By categorically lumping the total 45 percent of whites who either somewhat or strongly approve of the Tea Party, surveyors found that of that sum, “only 35% believe Blacks to be hardworking, only 45 % believe Blacks are intelligent, and only 41% think that Blacks are trustworthy,” with similar statistics for Latinos. The survey also included a scale for predicting “racial resentment,” a term used generally to describe a sliding scale of favorability of particular races. Tea Party members are only slightly more statistically likely to harbor resentful views of racial minorities in comparison to conservatives more broadly, at a coefficient of .25, in comparison with Independents who are just above 0.0, and Democrats at just below -.2. This calculation records statistical significance at .05 points, so the differences between the factions are significant.²⁵³ Essentially, this means that on a scale of unfavorability ratings for racial minorities, those who identify as Democrats are most favorable, followed by those who label themselves Independents but not Tea Partiers, followed by Tea Party supporters. Non-Tea Party Republicans fall just below Tea Partiers in these views, but well ahead of Independents.

²⁵² Christopher Parker et. al. “2010 Multi-State Survey of Race and Politics,” University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race and Sexuality. <http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/racepolitics.html>.

²⁵³ Ibid. “Beta Standardized Coefficients for Predictors of Racial Resentment Scale”
<http://depts.washington.edu/uwiser/resent.pdf>

While most scholarship focuses on views by Tea Party whites of racial minorities, there is scant attention to the reverse relationship – the views racial minorities have of Tea Partiers. The Washington study found that racial minorities are less likely to support and more likely to oppose, have no knowledge, or have no opinion on the Tea Party movement. Demographic information from earlier in this paper suggests that the majority of those who identified with the Tea Party in the New York Times/CBS poll are white. Given longstanding ties of black voters to the Democratic Party, it is not surprising that blacks and racial minorities more broadly, have skeptical views of a conservative movement. More research on how minorities perceive the Tea Party would be useful. Scholarship should not ignore that when examining charges of racial resentment, measures of favorability run in two directions, rather than just one.

Howard Lavine, a professor of political science at the University of Minnesota, conducted an additional study in which participants viewed a combination of a photograph and statement followed by survey questions. The study was an online survey of 800 respondents, a mix between Tea Party supporters and those who do not claim Tea Party affiliation. The first variable was the photograph, which alternated between an image of a white man standing beside a foreclosed home and the same setting, with a black man. The second variable was a statement, one that placed blame on the individual for taking out a mortgage they could not afford, the other more condemnatory of the economy while opening room for government intervention. The survey questions gauged levels of blame and anger participants expressed toward homeowners who lose their property. While Tea Partiers were more likely than the other respondents to place blame on the individual or the government, rather than Wall Street, they were also more likely than the rest to find fault with the

homeowner when prompted with the photograph of the black man. Broadly speaking, Tea Partiers were “significantly more likely to say that they blamed the homeowner for the problem, significantly more likely to say they opposed a government program to help that person with their mortgage problem and significantly more likely to say they were angry that such people might get assistance from such a program” when they saw the black man.²⁵⁴

Lavine explains that while Tea Partiers may never directly mention race as a concern or overtly assign blame to minorities in assessing the nation’s problems, these tropes psychologically influence their anger, perception of wrongdoing, and proclivity to favor a greater role for government.

Lingering Racial Bitterness?

Some point to the similarity in language between Tea Partiers and familiar “states’ rights” calls from the Jim Crow South as evidence of a lingering resentment of blacks and other minorities. One *Newsweek* story quotes David Bositis of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, who finds Tea Party criticism of government spending highly dubious given record-setting deficits by the Republican Bush administration. The story continues:

“Given modern societal norms, ‘they know they can’t use any overtly racist language,’ he contends. ‘So they use coded language’—questioning the patriotism of the president or complaining about “socialist” schemes to redistribute wealth.”²⁵⁵

While Bositis offers up no concrete statistics or further explanation, the theory is interesting to take on its face. A more academic way of reaching Bositis’ conclusion might be the tip of the iceberg theory introduced earlier. When Tea Partiers lament the increase in government

²⁵⁴ Eric Black, “Are Tea Partiers racist?” *MinnPost*, December 8, 2011. <http://www.minnpost.com/eric-black-ink/2011/12/are-tea-partiers-racists>. Lavine’s study has limited utility since it does not compare Tea Partiers with non-Tea Party Republicans, or Tea Partiers against all whites. Given that the Washington study found that a majority of whites, not only Tea Partiers, do not consider blacks hardworking, for example, it might be the case that all whites in Lavine’s study harbored similar stereotypes when viewing the images.

²⁵⁵ Arian Campo-Flores, “Are Tea Partiers Racist?” *Newsweek*, April 26, 2010. <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/04/25/are-tea-partiers-racist.html>.

debt levels, these well-meaning concerns are just the tip of the iceberg of a whole range of broader societal concerns. To oppose welfare spending, both corporate and safety net, begs the question of criteria for evaluating who is a worthy recipient, which inevitably leads to larger racial, religious – in a word, foundational – questions of what it means to be an American. Since the Tea Party embraces the language of “states’ rights,” a trope used by the pro-segregation South, it would not be unsurprising that the term’s reappearance triggers dormant racial views.

Skocpol takes a stab at addressing Bositis’ skepticism over the timing of Tea Party anger and its relation to racial anxiety. In her initial article, she writes:

“Opposition is concentrated on resentment of perceived federal government ‘handouts’ to ‘undeserving’ groups, the definition of which seems heavily influenced by racial and ethnic stereotypes. More broadly, Tea Party concerns exist within the context of anxieties about racial, ethnic, and generational changes in American society.”²⁵⁶

She echoes this conclusion in the book, writing:

“For Tea Partiers, deservingness is a cultural category, closely tied to certain racially and ethnically tinged assumptions [...] it is a heartfelt cry about where they fear ‘their country’ may be headed.”²⁵⁷

This explains neatly the iceberg theory, but the book adds on another layer, that the tip of the iceberg uniquely became prevalent because of a black president and other factors that added up to a perfect storm. Obama perceptually embodies many of the racial and immigrant fears Tea Partiers hold – the first black president, the son of a Kenyan immigrant, who personifies and amplifies fears that the country is foreign to Tea Partiers. If anger at the increasingly visible role of the federal government and rising immigrant populace really was simmering in the years prior to Obama taking office, then his election was the sufficient catalyst to propel resentment into a movement. Skocpol stresses that these are not new grievances or fears,

²⁵⁶ Skocpol et al., *Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Article), 26.

²⁵⁷ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, (Book) 2-3.

rather, they have a history in traditional conservative thought. This paper's earlier examination of Skousen and the John Birch Society particularly make vulnerable the Tea Party to this criticism, rather than isolated incidents of overtly racist remarks. One cannot simply bracket out these undertones, but it would also be a mistake to exaggerate their pervasiveness.

Kate Zernike finds historical precedent for coded racial language in past battles over government spending, writing "Race was more subtle in conservative populist movements like the tax revolts that began in California and spread across the country in the late 1970s [...] 'them' isn't always identified as blacks – these were middle class people who don't see themselves as racists, and they aren't – but it's clear that 'them' is racialized."²⁵⁸ Zernike argues that these financial issues in the 70s were indeed tied closely to deeply held cultural assumptions and fears – the fear of the country slipping away joined with to whom it was slipping. Similarly, when Tea Partiers refer collectively to the undeserving, Zernike, Skocpol and others argue that racial demarcations may influence this categorization.

Tea Party politicians at the national level make statements against pieces of historic civil rights progress on Constitutional grounds, but these positions raise questions about racial biases. Rand Paul, son of presidential candidate Ron Paul and newly minted Kentucky Senator, drew flak for suggesting that the Civil Rights Act's regulation of the conduct of private business owners in denying access to minorities encroached too far on liberty.²⁵⁹ Paul and others advocated repeal of the 14th amendment, claiming that it curtails states' rights. Ron Paul also recently came under fire for his past newsletters that contained racially offensive language, such as this quotation, "Given the inefficiencies of what DC laughingly

²⁵⁸ Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 57.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 178-179.

calls the criminal justice system, I think we can safely assume that 95 percent of the black males in that city are semi-criminal or entirely criminal.”²⁶⁰

A report by Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights finds considerable overlap between explicitly racist and militia groups and the Tea Party, though the evidence is largely anecdotal. In painstaking detail, the report outlines a number of prominent Tea Party speakers, authors, and even musical acts with former or ongoing ties to supremacist organizations. While the response to these allegations sometimes involves a retraction by the Tea Party group involved, often reactions vary, but the authors stress that Dick Armey’s Tea Party Express definitively takes itself out of these discussions by instructing members to focus solely on economic concerns. The report finds correlation between negative views of Obama, criticism of his birthplace, overlap with white supremacist groups, and the movement’s historical appeal that adds up to a “nationalist movement” that “does not include all Americans, and separates itself from those it regards as insufficiently real Americans.”²⁶¹

While the report presents the connection as overwhelming, that it relies solely on isolated accounts rather than statistics of the many hundreds of groups nationwide undermines its credibility on making a criticism of the movement in its entirety. As the Ron Paul newsletters demonstrate, there is probably a significant rhetorical similarity between calls for limited government, taking back the country, and resistance to change that resonate with militia and supremacist groups, as well as the obvious measures to appeal to them on racial grounds. That is different from arguing that such appeals are foundational to Tea Party advocacies.

²⁶⁰ Michael Brendan Dougherty “The Story Behind Ron Paul’s Racist Newsletters,” *The Atlantic* December 21, 2011 <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/12/the-story-behind-ron-pauls-racist-newsletters/250338/>.

²⁶¹ Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind, “Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions,” (Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, Fall 2010) 68.

Responses to Racial Criticism

Right-leaning pollster Scott Rasmussen is more sympathetic to Tea Partiers on the issue of race, but he also stresses the need to weed out racially biased voices. He argues, “Most [in the media] were quick to dismiss *all* Tea Party protesters as racist and irrelevant. They failed to *listen* to the underlying concerns [...]”²⁶² Rasmussen encourages Tea Parties to clamp down on racist rhetoric, not so much as an end in itself, but to cast the movement in a positive light and attract additional adherents.

Emily Ekins also provided research, on a small sample size, to the *Washington Post* documenting the number of signs at a Tea Party rally that mentioned race or conspiracy theories. At the September 12, 2010 Taxpayer March on Washington, more than half of the 250 signs she photographed focused on the economy, in contrast to 5 percent that attacked Obama personally and only a few that questioned his citizenship. She sums up her findings saying, “When 25 percent of the coverage is devoted to those signs, it suggests that this is the issue that 25 percent of people think is so important that they're going to put it on a sign, when it's actually only a couple of people.”²⁶³ Those signs that did attack the president on racial grounds tied him to a foreign birthplace, as one sign read, “somewhere in Kenya a village is missing an idiot.” One can hardly take Ekins’ research of a single rally as evidence that conclusively debunks associations between the Tea Party and racism, but the criticism of press focus on a few outliers, rather than the mean, is valid.

Cathy Young, a regular columnist at Real Clear Politics, criticizes the University of Washington study for not providing the full results of the questions on racial attitudes. While

²⁶² Rasmussen, *Mad As Hell*, 165. His emphasis.

²⁶³ Amy Gardner, “Few signs at Tea Party rally expressed racially charged anti-Obama signs,” *The Washington Post* October 14, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/13/AR2010101303634.html?hpid=topnews>.

strong Tea Party supporters who are white are more likely than other white groups to view blacks as less intelligent, all white groups in the survey find blacks less intelligent than whites.²⁶⁴ Similar trends hold for other queries, begging that question of whether negative views of blacks is something unique for Tea Partiers or whether it reflects across-the-board stereotyping by whites of all political stripes. Young quotes John McWhorter, a black professor of linguistics, who responds to racial allegations against the Tea Party by saying, “The position that the government does too much to help black people is not necessarily one based in inherent bias against people with black skin -- it can be argued as a reasonable proposition based on the spotty record of social programs since the 1960s.”²⁶⁵ While the charge that the government does too much to help blacks has an implicit racial tone, this position argues that it is not racist per se, but reflects a broader paradigm of weighing between deserving and undeserving. Skocpol also points out that the Tea Party has negative views on intelligence and work ethic of everyone, but particularly so for blacks.²⁶⁶

New Hampshire Legislators and Race

In my interviews with New Hampshire legislators, one expressed fear of foreign law tied to Islam. Rep. John Burt said that in a Florida homicide case in which a father murdered his daughter, a judge allowed consideration of his Muslim background as a possible defense.²⁶⁷ The problem with his testimony is conflation of separate court cases – while there have been several cases of honor killings in the United States in recent years, the Florida case to which he referred is actually an arbitration dispute between competing stakeholders of a Tampa

²⁶⁴ Cathy Young, “Tea Partiers Racist? No So Fast,” *RealClearPolitics*, April 25, 2010.
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/04/25/tea_partiers_racist_not_so_fast_105309.html.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Skocpol and Williamson, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (Book), 215 f44.

²⁶⁷ Burt interview.

mosque. In the latter case, the judge cited Sharia law to encourage the parties to settle the dispute through arbitration rather than through the courts²⁶⁸ – a narrow and specifically tailored citation pertaining to a unique instance of Muslim parties settling a dispute over a Mosque, hardly the stuff of a dystopian future but enough for conspiracy theorists. Burt said he supports a law “banning the use of foreign laws” in court cases or legislation, a move the Florida state House took on March 7, 2012.²⁶⁹

As this paper previously explored, skepticism of Lincoln and reverence of the Founders and original Constitution despite the peculiar institution beg the question of racial bias among legislators. When Rep. Manuse gave me a list of those Founders that were ideologically closest to him, he offered George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Sam Adams. I challenged him on the point by noting that two of the three owned slaves and questioned him how he could support or reconcile that fact.²⁷⁰ He was visibly uncomfortable with the question and responded with not just with an obvious criticism of slavery but a further criticism of Lincoln and the way the Civil War challenged state sovereignty. The Civil War turned “a voluntary republic into an involuntary association,” he said. “Slavery was evil but the underlying principle should be that states have the right to pursue their own agenda,” he explained, offering a Constitutional amendment banning slavery as a preferable alternative to war. How that process of amending the Constitution, which requires a congressional two-thirds majority and the approval of three-fourths of state legislatures, would be possible in a Union composed of fifteen slave states, did not occur to Rep. Manuse,

²⁶⁸ William Levesque, “Judge orders use of Islamic law in Tampa dispute over Mosque leadership,” *Tampa Bay Times* March 22, 2011 <http://www.tampabay.com/news/courts/civil/article1158818.ece>.

²⁶⁹ Jeremy White, “Florida Sharia law bill advances, joining south Dakota,” *International Business Times* March 2, 2012 <http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/308224/20120302/florida-sharia-south-dakota-oklahoma-ban-what.htm>.

²⁷⁰ Manuse interview.

but the issue did not advance further into the discussion. At the conclusion of the interview, he reiterated that he obviously was opposed to slavery as it represents the absolute tyranny of the government, that Thomas Jefferson himself had mixed feelings about the institution, and a critique of Lincoln's use of war powers. While Rep. Manuse did not express support of slavery or racism, the states' rights refrain that so harmonizes with a century of Jim Crow apologists, combined with sheer ambivalence over the tangible process of ending slavery, is difficult to discard outright.

While in addressing welfare, as the previous chapter noted, no legislator explicitly mentioned race of recipients. It is possible, though difficult to substantiate in a brief interview, that racial factors informed the categorization of deserving and undeserving recipients. Rep. Winter contended that welfare rewards bad behavior for drug addicts²⁷¹ and Rep. Bowers²⁷² shared an anecdote about how those on food stamps blow the money on fancy cuts of steak. If one takes the earlier interpretations of Bositis, Skocpol, and Zernike, then the references to traditional tropes such as drug addiction and its connection to welfare may be implicit cues to racial stereotyping. That all of the legislators I spoke to are white, as well as nearly 94 percent of New Hampshire's population,²⁷³ complicates the matter further – how often does interracial contact occur, if ever, in the Granite State?

Conclusions on Race

My inclination is that while it may be possible to find similar racial resentment in legislators, it is unfair based on their statements to assume this is likely. They stand in contrast to Tea Party organizers, whom Skocpol, Zernike, and Rasmussen present as highly

²⁷¹ Winter interview.

²⁷² Bowers interview.

²⁷³ US Census Bureau, "New Hampshire," <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/33000.html>

attuned to the race card and eager to point out counterexamples of racial inclusion, almost to preempt such criticisms. New Hampshire legislators are instead concerned about ideology and the wonkish details of policy practice. They are just as likely to oppose welfare spending on undeserving whites as they are on undeserving blacks – the question of who deserves benefits lingers, but with a sharper focus on merit.

The example of racially biased views is another that makes clear the distinction between Tea Party voters and legislators. While the legislators made controversial policy statements, none expressed any lingering racial resentment, in contrast to Tea Party supporters, for whom race places an important role in determining categories of deserving and undeserving. Just as how social issue concerns factor into economic positions of Tea Partiers but not ideological legislators, racial perceptions affect Tea Party supporters but not legislators. This may also be too hasty a conclusion, given that the methods for detecting racial resentment among Tea Party supporters included covert studies, such as the photograph survey. Those respondents may subconsciously expressed racial opinions, while the New Hampshire legislators did not proffer any and were not prompted to do so.

Immigration

Illegal immigration is an issue of concern for many Tea Partiers, more so than it is for a majority of Americans. 82 percent of Tea Partiers believe illegal immigration is a very serious problem for the country, in comparison to 60 percent of all respondents in the New York Times/CBS poll.²⁷⁴ Despite this difference, a plurality of both Tea Party respondents and all respondents believe that legal immigration levels should decrease, and roughly a third of respondents in both categories believe levels should stay the same. This bolsters an

²⁷⁴ New York Times/CBS poll.

important distinction – while Tea Partiers are likely to agree with most Americans when it comes to tangible policy questions (the number of immigrants), they are more likely to react negatively on questions that are perceptual in nature (the threat of the problem). For perspective, Rasmussen includes responses to a survey comparing elite and public opinion on immigration. The poll, which predates the NY Times survey by a year, found that 66 percent of public respondents found enforcement against illegal immigration to be very important, in contrast to 32 percent of “the political elite.” While Americans split evenly on whether reform or amnesty policies should follow, 74 percent of the political class favored widespread legalization of immigrants currently without legal status.²⁷⁵

Illegal immigration plays into the familiar narrative of deserving and undeserving recipients of welfare. The concern is less about immigrants taking jobs and more about illegal immigrants taking services when they have not played by the same rules of hardworking Tea Party citizens. Again, it could be that the undeserving label applied to illegal immigrants is just the tip of the iceberg for a breadth of anxiety immigrant presents. The “there goes the neighborhood” mentality that even a handful of immigrants represent to white natives fearing for the social cohesion or disorder of their communities might play into these policy concerns.²⁷⁶

Skocpol and Williamson write of the enormous role immigration plays in the Tea Party:

“We find this concern about immigration to be central to Tea Party ideology. When we polled Massachusetts Tea Partiers about the issues they thought were most important for the Tea Party to address, 62 out of 79, or 78 percent of respondents, thought that ‘Immigration and Border Security’ was ‘very important.’ In fact, immigration and border security came in a close second to the Boston Tea Partiers’ top-ranked concern about

²⁷⁵ Rasmussen and Schoen, *Mad As Hell*, 104.

²⁷⁶ See Peter Skerry, “Immigration and Social Disorder,” in *Uniting America: Restoring the Vital Center to American Democracy* eds. Norton Garfinkle and Daniel Yankelovich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). See also William Julius Wilson and Richard Taub, *There Goes the Neighborhood: Racial, Ethnic, and Class Tensions on Four Chicago Neighborhoods and Their Meaning for America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

‘Deficits and Spending’ (rated very important by 69 of the 79 respondents). Moreover, discussions of immigration seemed to provoke an especially emotional response.”²⁷⁷ Immigration strikes such a nerve because it represents the height of government

irresponsibility, according to Tea Partiers. The government ignores the problem of illegal immigration, rewards those who come here anyway, to the expense of taxpayers who must then shoulder the burden.

While New Hampshire legislators noted that immigration was not an issue that particularly affected their state, they still offered their opinions on the matter. Rep. Burt said illegal immigration is a problem the government needs to “take care of.”²⁷⁸ He noted poor conditions in Mexico and said, “Those who come legally I welcome,” but admonishing that “you should go to jail if you break laws.”

Rep. Manuse took a harder line, advocating tougher border enforcement.²⁷⁹ He said, “I believe in controlling the border – how can you have a country or a culture or a rule of law without borders? And [borders represent] a way of controlling people who wish to do you harm coming from without.” There was a sense from Rep. Manuse that illegal immigrants are actively trying to undermine the American polity, a fear shared by other Tea Party sympathizers. But his opposition to illegal immigration did not trump his libertarian sense of civil liberties, saying that he wants “to protect innocent civilians’ liberty more than prevent the bad guy,” a sentiment with which he is consistent through a range of issues, including full-body airport scans.

Rep. Bowers called immigration a “theoretical problem - we’re not aware of it in New Hampshire. It’s something that just riles people. If there is legalization, most of us will say

²⁷⁷ Skocpol et. al, *Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, (Article) 33-34.

²⁷⁸ Burt interview.

²⁷⁹ Manuse interview.

‘that makes sense.’”²⁸⁰ He supports minimal measures such as E-verify and suggested that hospitals could make use of a similar system to prevent taxpayer money from “providing services to them.” He argued, “it’s always the case that [hospitals] deal with the emergency, then financing.”

Rep. Winter took the hardest line of the group who commented on immigration, advocating total closing of the borders but concluding, “All the GOP are for legal immigration.”²⁸¹ The GOP is against illegal immigration, he said.

Conclusions on Immigration

Tea Party feelings about immigration policy stem from broader emotions about immigration. The notion that immigrants did not play by the same rules as Tea Partiers is central, while the paper speculates that social disorder and the changing physical makeup of neighborhoods might also trigger fears. Tea Partiers place great importance on immigration as an issue and agree with most Americans that immigration (legal and illegal) levels should decrease. They are much more perceptually fearful of the problem than are most Americans, precisely because they more likely have that unique social anxiety.

New Hampshire legislators, by contrast, do not have great anxiety over immigration. The problem of immigrants from Mexico is far from their state. They do stake out positions on the policy questions similar to Tea Partiers – favoring legal immigration, reducing eligibility for welfare, etc. The difference is that it is not an issue of much importance to the legislators, as it is to Tea Partiers nationwide. It may well be that Tea Party legislators from states where immigration’s effects are more perceptible, such as in Arizona, devote much greater attention to the issue than do legislators from the distant Northeast. Some of the free market principles

²⁸⁰ Bowers interview.

²⁸¹ Winter interview.

Tea Partiers espouse run contrary to desires for immigration restriction. It's probable that libertarian-minded legislators who favor small government across the board would see the shutdown of borders or the Arizona immigration law as power gone awry. They might support liberalization policies that run contrary to the desires of Tea Party constituents who favor extreme measures such as deportation of all illegal immigrants, for example. An equivalent of Manuse in Arizona, who runs on a popular Tea Party line of small government but who implements radical libertarian policies, would be a very different officeholder than expected by those with genuine fears over immigration's effects on their neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Those who identify with the Tea Party do so out of shared sentiments for the direction of the country and a fear over its changing course. While they have genuine concerns about government debt, spending, and taxation, which went unaired during the Bush administration, leading critics to conclude that the movement's grievances are entirely without merit. The reason for their appearance in 2009 has much to do with the latent social anxieties carried over from the Bush years and exacerbated by accelerating progress: a black president, the son of an immigrant, appealing to youth voters and running on a platform of advances for homosexual couples and big changes in the role of government. As one Tea Partier put it, "You don't have to be racist to look at: there's a black president, there's a woman speaker, it doesn't look the same."²⁸²

The unease is not just how the country looks, but how it feels. For Republicans disaffected and regrouping after drubbings at the polls in 2006 and 2008, the Tea Party presented an opportunity to voice common goals. Tea Partiers are not rugged Independents, most of them were conservative Republicans already. Distinguishing between Tea Partiers and Republicans in polling is difficult because there is so much overlap in opinion, but what makes Tea Party people distinct is that cultural fear, the feeling that the country they grew up in is no longer there. If one assumes roughly half of the electorate votes Republican in presidential elections, then survey responses from all Americans are likely to include a great deal of Republican voters who do not identify with the Tea Party. Their assigning of blame for the recession, trust in government, and hope for the country's future are different from

²⁸² Zernike, *Boiling Mad*, 59.

Tea Partiers, who blame Congress and Obama, have little trust in government, and hold dim views of their economic prospects, despite their relatively higher income.

Although most Americans do not think the Tea Party shares their views, the Tea Party is correct that they represent the views of most Americans – to a point. On the operational policy questions of support for Social Security and Medicare, gay marriage, abortion, and others, majorities or pluralities of both Tea Party supporters and the rest of Americans favor moderate positions: welfare for the deserving, civil unions, and abortion with limits. Where Tea Party supporters and Americans disagree are the same perceptual distinctions that separate Tea Party Republicans from non-Tea Party Republicans. President Obama is not too popular among most Americans, but he is not too unpopular either, except when it comes to Tea Partiers. Congress is universally unpopular, but most Americans hold their own representatives in high esteem, in contrast to Tea Partiers, who have an anti-incumbent zeal. The perception that the Tea Party is angry is what turns other Americans away from their ranks, even though their differences on the tangibles are more minor than the conventional wisdom would depict. All Americans hold the Founders and the Constitution close to their hearts, but Tea Partiers do so more fervently and with more puzzling implications for jurisprudence.

New Hampshire Tea Party legislators have something in common with non-Tea Party Americans – they lack the same emotional convictions about their beliefs. With the exception of Rep. Burt, who expressed the same generational fears for his grandchildren as the Tea Party faithful, the legislators in this paper were driven by ideology, not social anxiety. Rep. Boehm also conveyed his affection for his grandchildren with more conservative social views than some but more moderate views overall.

Reps. Bowers, Manuse, and Tasker, in contrast to moderate colleagues, are radical libertarians who are remarkably consistent in their beliefs. Manuse opposes all welfare, progressive taxation, the Civil War but also full-body scans in airports. Bowers and Tasker surely want to see lower taxes and lower government spending, but they also favor decriminalization of marijuana, a position that would likely not go over well with the older Tea Party supporters with social anxiety over rapidly changing mores. There are certainly libertarians among the Tea Party rank and file, but that most surveys find Tea Partiers to be in line with Republicans gives credence to claims that they are generally traditional conservatives. Though, it bears noting again, even among traditional conservatives in the Tea Party, a narrow plurality favors moderate positions on tangible policy proposals.

Given the anger circulating among Tea Party rallies, the student of political science would expect similar vitriol from New Hampshire legislators. While their policy positions are certainly to the far right of the mainstream, their tenor is not disrespectful; rather, they have a profound sense of appreciation for the state's unique political character. They take pride in having close relationships with constituents or scoring high on caucus report cards. While collegiality across the aisle may not be what it once was, libertarian positions put figures like Manuse in working relationships with liberal democrats on opposing airport body scans, for example. While most politicians run for Congress by running against it, these state legislators are able to put distance between themselves and the political establishment by noting the traditional lack of professional experience among elected officials in New Hampshire and the low salary as evidence of their citizen-first status.

To be sure, the sample size of these legislators is even too small to draw conclusions on the entire chamber. From ideological surveys and report cards, one can be certain that the

extremity in positions is not an aberration; it is a shared ideology. Whether the pride these particular legislators feel for their role extends to the whole chamber, one cannot be certain. The limitation in the scope of the study to New Hampshire also limits applicability to other Tea Party-influenced legislatures in other states.

This paper does serve the purpose of confirming political science's increasingly demonstrable finding, that elites are more partisan in their views than non-elites. For those social conservatives who are would-be Tea Party backers in New Hampshire, the positions of their elected officials deserve closer scrutiny. Though Tea Partisanship in New Hampshire led to budget cuts that eroded crucial services for the state and other bills that seek a libertarian landscape, this paper demonstrates that the legislative process itself, however strained, is still a chorus of better angels, advancing what they sincerely believe to be the American dream.

Appendix 1: Interview Request Form

Dear Rep. _____,

Hi, I'm Brendan Benedict, a senior student of political science at Boston College. I'm contacting you to ask for your assistance with my thesis, which is on the topic of the Tea Party and conservatism in New Hampshire. I'm interested in learning how the Tea Party movement corresponds with the Republican party more generally.

At this stage, I am just interested in learning how you first became involved in politics, what policies you want to change in New Hampshire, and if you could offer contacts who may be interested in the project.

At a later point, I will compile information on the ideological views of all New Hampshire legislators on topics such as the size and scope of government, taxation, education, and perennial social issues.

If you have time in your busy schedule, I would appreciate an informal, in-person interview of about 30 minutes. We can meet per your convenience in Concord or closer to your home.

Let me also stress that my research is strictly academic and does not aim to cater toward a particular political persuasion. Your responses would be confidential in the research, at your request.

If you agree to participate in this project, I will consider your agreement to indicate that you understand the nature of the project and your participation.

If you are interested, please contact me via email or telephone (732-939-7055).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brendan Benedict

Appendix 2: Interview Protocol

- 1) How did you first get involved in politics?
Possible divergences:
 - did someone ask you to run?
 - have you had political experience before?
 - funding?
 - who were your big supporters on the campaign trail, aides, etc.?
 - any mentors already in the establishment?
- 2) What are your main concerns before/now in office?
 - What's wrong with the way NH is governed?
 - How do you fix it?
 - What's wrong with the way the US is governed, federally?
 - How do you fix it?
- 3) What are your thoughts on the TP? [If subject positively identifies with the Tea Party]
 - Do you identify with the TP?
 - What draws you to the TP?
 - What can you tell me about the TP in NH
- 4) Any contacts – TP, FS, libertarian, campaigning

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